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## Areopagitic influence and neoplatonic (Plotinian) echoes in Photius' *Amphilochia*: question 180

**Abstract:** Focusing on one of the most representative works of Patriarch Photius, the *Amphilochia* and precisely on the Question 180, the present study tries to advance our understanding of Photius' thought and especially to investigate the following important question, namely to what extent Patriarch Photius was influenced by neoplatonism and in which way. In this point lies exactly the contribution of present study, to assess and evaluate the areopagitic and neoplatonic (mostly Plotinian) elements in the thought of this great theological figure of the Eastern Church. The analysis of this specific source from *Amphilochia* shows a direct influence of the unknown writer of the areopagitic works on Photius and an indirect transfer of neoplatonic elements (through Dionysius) to the philosophical thinking of the famous Patriarch. So Dionysius Areopagites proves to be the mediator between neoplatonic and Christian byzantine thought. Although the mediation of Dionysios between Plotinus and Photius is undisputable, a direct knowledge of the work of Plotinus from Photius cannot be excluded at all. For, central ideas of the metaphysics of the One such as the idea of unity and the apophatic method as a proper way for man to approach God are clearly found in this specific passage of *Amphilochia*. This result is not only for Photius' theological system but also for the byzantine Theology and Philosophy in general of great importance. So the study shows something, which was not very well demonstrated so far: Photius' extensive use not only of Aristoteles but also of Neoplatonism and through that: The continuity of the byzantine with the ancient Greek thought.

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## Introduction

Patriarch Photius of Constantinople is one of the most important theologians of the Eastern Church whose writings, especially in the area of trinitarian theology,

exercised an enormous influence on later figures (e.g., Gregory of Cyprus, Gregory Palamas, and Nilus Cabasilas). Photius's most significant work, his systematic refutation of the *Filioque* in *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, constitutes the backbone of orthodox criticism toward the theology of the procession as taught by the Latin Church.

Various important studies have been published in recent years on the *Filioque* issue and on Photius's contributions to the debate.<sup>1</sup> All of them have focused on the problem of the procession of the Holy Spirit, stressing Photius's theological objections to the *Filioque* as it had come to be understood in the Frankish West. Whereas the majority of these recent studies have centered on Photius's trinitarian theology, the recent book of Georgi KAPRIEV, "Philosophie in Byzanz" (Würzburg 2005), attempted to highlight the influence of philosophical thought, especially Platonism and Aristotelianism, on both Photius and Eastern Christianity as a whole. For example, KAPRIEV examined Photius's analysis of Aristotle's categories and Plato's "Ideas," offering an insight into Byzantine philosophical thinking in the ninth century. However, I would argue that KAPRIEV's work suffers some significant shortcomings. First, he treats the relation of Photius to Platonism and Aristotelianism by focusing only on the issues of Platonic "Ideas" and Aristotle's categories, and then does so without providing a concrete and thorough analysis of the sources. In fact, the footnotes contain neither references to Platonic nor Aristotelian source-material, a fact which makes it impossible to draw the comparison between Photius and Plotinus, and consequently to discern the differences or similarities between Greek philosophy and Byzantine Theology on several key issues (e.g., God as absolute Goodness, God as inaccessible by human reason). Second, although KAPRIEV claims in the headline of Paragraph 4.2.5 that he treats the relation of Photius to Platonism and Aristotelianism, he does not clarify if, and to what extent, Photius' interpretation of Aristotle's categories coincides with that of Plotinus. Kapriev provides us with no conclusions about the position of Photius concerning the "*Ousia*" and the "*pros ti*" compared with that of Plotinus, who considers Aristotele's categories to belong strictly to the sensible world. On the contrary, Plotinus considers the essence to belong

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<sup>1</sup> See the following studies: B. OBERDORFER, *Filioque. Geschichte und Theologie eines ökumenischen Problems. Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie*, 96. Göttingen 2001, 164–179; P. GEMEINHARDT, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse zwischen Ost- und Westkirche im Frühmittelalter. Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte*, 82. Berlin 2002, 244–298; TH. ALEXOPOULOS, *Der Ausgang des Thearchischen Geistes. Eine Untersuchung der Filioque-Frage anhand Photius' "Mystagogie des Hl. Geistes"*, Konstantin Melitiniotes "Zwei Antirrhetici" und Augustins "De Trinitate". Göttingen 2009; A.E. SIECIENSKI, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy*. Oxford 2010.

to the intelligible and places it among the five megista Gene (Γέννη) of Plato's *Sophistes*. Third, KAPRIEV never tells us if, and to what extent, the fundamental ideas of the Plotinian system (e.g., "Unity", the apophatic way as the most adequate way of approaching the divine, "the One") are to be found in Photius's philosophical thinking.

My goal in this article is to explore this last important area by uncovering and evaluating the Neoplatonic elements essential to Photius's work. In my view, this task is of great significance for two reasons. First, currently there exists no study specifically dealing with the appropriation of Neoplatonic thought, and especially that of Plotinus, in the work of Photius.<sup>2</sup> Second, in order to understand Photius the theologian we must be aware of how he took advantage of the ideas and concepts of classic antiquity in order to express the Christian message, thereby bringing the two closer to each other. In this respect Photius is considered to be the true restorer of classical studies in Byzantium, a fact which makes him differ radically from many other Byzantine scholars. Because of the multifarious nature of the subject, I will restrict myself to the analysis of "Question 180" in the *Amphilochia*, providing both a translation of the primary text and an elucidation of the Neoplatonic as well the Areopagitic elements of the passage.

This passage from the *Amphilochia* has not been chosen by accident. It is provided to the reader because the *Amphilochia* occupies an important place within Photius's *œuvre*. Along with the *Myriobiblon*, it constitutes a rich spring of theological and philosophical knowledge, which complement one another.<sup>3</sup> It is a synthesis, an anthology, including matters scientific, theological, metaphysical, exegetical, and philosophical, all thoroughly treated, clearly showing the erudition of the Patriarch.<sup>4</sup> The majority of the questions treated were written during the period of the first exile (867–872), a fact ascertained from the con-

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2 This kind of investigation has already been successfully done in the field of Patristics, especially with regard to the influence of Plotinus on Saint Gregory of Nyssa. See the Studies of T. BÖHM, *Theoria – Unendlichkeit – Aufstieg. Philosophische Implikationen zu De Vita Moysis von Gregor von Nyssa. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, 35. Leiden 1996, and of S.R.C. LILLA, *Neuplatonisches Gedankengut in den Homilien über die Seligpreisungen Gregors von Nyssa. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, 68. Leiden 2004.

3 J. HERGENRÖTHER, *Photius Patriarch von Konstantinopel. Sein Leben, seine Schriften, und das Griechische Schisma*. Regensburg 1869, III 49.

4 Cf. *Amph. Q. 240* (Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et *Amphilochia*, ed. L.G. WESTERINK. Leipzig 1987, VI 21, 4–8): πλὴν ἐκ τῶν προλαβόντων ἡμᾶς ὁσίων καὶ μακαρίων ἀνδρῶν λαβὰς οὐκ ὀλίγας συλλεξάμενοι, καὶ ὥς ἡ τῆς θείας ροπῆς εὐμένεια παρασχεῖν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἀπηξίωσεν, ταύτας ἐκείναις συνάψαντες. See also HERGENRÖTHER, *Photius* (as footnote 3 above) 42.

stant references of the Patriarch to the difficulties faced during that period, especially to the deficit of books and secretaries, as well as to the severity of his persecution.<sup>5</sup>

The whole treatise is supposedly dedicated to the issues sent by the close friend of Photius, Amphilochius of Iconium, who allegedly asked the Patriarch to give answers to various questions. However, a more thorough examination shows that not all the questions were initially addressed and sent to Amphilochius, leading us to the conclusion that the correspondence between Photius and his close friend might contain some fictitious elements.<sup>6</sup> Oftentimes this genre of literary work, the “dedication” (i.e., writing a kind response to the request of a friend), was used in ancient Greek and Latin literature when the author wanted to show his modesty to his audience.<sup>7</sup> Oftentimes in this genre someone from the author’s circle is chosen as the addressee with the intention of honouring him/her or thanking him/her for a kindness.<sup>8</sup> In any case, this form of writing gives a special style and character to the *Amphilochia*, which rouses the reader’s interest.

The selected passage from *Amphilochia* has also been chosen with great care. It is the first among several passages (*Questions* 180–184 and 188–190) in which Photius deals with subtle theological questions concerning the Trinity and its *ad extra* activity towards creation. But why this passage in particular? From the outset and throughout the text the reader is struck both by the abundant use of neoplatonic-areopagitic terminology as well as the conceptual/philosophical consistency on the major issues. For these reasons alone this passage is, in my personal assessment, unique and worthy of consideration.

Before providing the translation of the text and going into its analysis, I believe that it would greatly benefit the reader to make a short reference to the specific Neoplatonic criteria according to which the Photian text is to be evaluated. First of all is the notion of “unity.” Unity is the most fundamental condition of being. It is conceived of as the condition *sine qua non* for the very reality of all things. In *Enneade* VI 9, 1 the cornerstone of Plotinus’s philosophy of unity is laid: “Every being both this one which is primary and in full sense being and that one which is said to belong accidentally among beings is existent through

5 Q. 78 (V 102, 10–13 WESTERINK): τοῦ καιροῦ τὸ βαρύτατον καὶ τῶν ὑπογραφέων τὸ ἄπορον. For further quotations see HERGENRÖTHER, *ibid.* 40.

6 Cf. HERGENRÖTHER, *ibid.* 40.

7 Cf. *Amph. Prologus* (IV 1, 1–3 WESTERINK): τῆς σπουδῆς σου τὸ γνήσιον δυσωπηθεὶς τὴν σὴν ἀφῆκα πρὸς πέρας ἐλθεῖν, ὡς ἠλπισας, αἰτησιν. Καίτοι πολλὰ ἦν, καὶ κράτος εἶχεν, ἃ τὴν ἐμὴν γνώμην ἐκείθεν ἀνέστελλεν.

8 Cf. H. GÖRGEMANN, Widmung, *Der Neue Pauly*, 12/2 (2003), 508–509.

the One. For, what thing could be in existence, if it was not one. Deprived of unity a being ceases no more to be what it is called.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the fact that something exists is grounded on the fact that it is one. When something ceases to be one it ceases to exist.<sup>10</sup> This fact further implies that it is impossible to say what reality is, i.e., to define it, without considering it as a unity.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, unity is the condition of predication and definition of being. Without its character as a unity, being could not be defined at all, and what it is completely undefined neither is a concrete being, nor does it exist, nor can it be conceived.<sup>12</sup>

Unity appears as a necessary condition both for the predication and definition of the being, and for its value as an entity. Plotinus detects different degrees of unity within beings – the greater the unity, the closer the proximity to the One and the greater the value of the entity.<sup>13</sup> A being with a greater deal of unity when compared to another is “more being” (μᾶλλον ὄν).<sup>14</sup> Yet the unity of every being is, after all, but particular and incomplete, since as a particular limited mode of coherence it only ‘shares’ in the One.

Moreover, unity is condition for multiplicity since multiplicity appears in its existence to be a united multiplicity, a unified whole, which is structured from the variety of its parts. Because of this fact it is contingent. Multiplicity, if it does not become one, even though it consists of many elements, could not be named as being.<sup>15</sup> So the notion of multiplicity presupposes the notion of unity in two ways: the unity of the whole of a multiplicity and the unity of each of its parts.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Plotinus, *Enn.* VI 9, 1 (Plotini Opera III ed. P. HENRY / H.R. SCHWYZER. Oxford 1964 – 1982, III 271, 1–4: Πάντα τὰ ὄντα τῷ ἐνὶ ἐστὶν ὄντα, ὅσα τε πρῶτως ἐστὶν ὄντα, καὶ ὅσα ὁπωσοῦν λέγεται ἐν τοῖς οὐσι εἶναι. Τί γὰρ ἂν καὶ εἴη, εἰ μὴ ἔν εἴη; Ἐπεὶπερ ἀφαιρεθέντα τοῦ ἐν ὃ λέγεται οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκεῖνα.

<sup>10</sup> *Enn.* VI 6, 1 (III 171, 50–51 HENRY/SCHWYZER): οὐδὲν γὰρ ὄν, ὃ μὴ ἔν. See also Plato, *Parmenides*, 166 C1: ἐν εἰ μὴ ἔστιν, οὐδὲν ἐστίν.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. CH. D’ANCONA COSTA, Plotinus and later Platonic philosophers on the causality of the first principle, in L. P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. Cambridge 1996, 361.

<sup>12</sup> J. HALFWASSEN, Plotin und der Neuplatonismus. München 2004, 32–33.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. BUSSANICH, Plotinus’s metaphysics of the One, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (as FOOTNOTE 11 above) 46, with reference to *Enn.* VI 2, 11 (III 58, 14–15 HENRY/SCHWYZER): ἀλλ’ ἔστι μὴ ἥττον ὄν ὑπάρχον ἥττον εἶναι ἔν. In respect to the degrees of being in the thought of Plotinus see J. HALFWASSEN, *Der Aufstieg zum Einen. Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde*, 9. Stuttgart 1992, 41–52.

<sup>14</sup> *Enn.* VI 9, 1 (III 272, 26–28 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Enn.* V 3, 15 (II 228, 14–15 HENRY/SCHWYZER): μὴ γὰρ ἔν γενόμενον, κἂν ἐκ πολλῶν ᾗ, οὐπω ἐστὶν ὄν εἴποι τις αὐτό.

<sup>16</sup> HALFWASSEN, Plotin und der Neuplatonismus (as footnote 12 above) 33.

The character of unity inherent to every multiplicity as a whole consisting of unities implies a radical transcendent principle, which must be conceived as outside all plurality and compositeness, as a pure unity.<sup>17</sup> Pure unity means negation of any kind of definition, which could drag it into multiplicity and consequently into a certain limitation. Pure unity means, above all, absolute simplicity, implying total absence of every kind of distinction or division between the concrete thing and its definition. This means total absence of any ontological structure and negation of every positive predication for it. Such a predication has a dual structure since it always says something about something and thus, in that respect, cannot meet the absolute simplicity of the One. So the necessary conclusion must be drawn – there can be no defining the One.<sup>18</sup> This leads us to Plotinus' highest metaphysical axiom, namely that the One or Good is ineffable. In fact, Plotinus even appears to be hesitant about attributing "Good," "is" or even "One" to it because of his deep conviction that every kind of human discourse, even negative language, remains unsatisfactory to describe it in its nature.<sup>19</sup> It is also no being, otherwise the predication "One" would be attributed also to another thing. In reality, no name is proper for it; and if indeed somebody must name it, he will fittingly name it in general the "One", but not as if it was firstly something else and afterwards the "One."<sup>20</sup>

17 Cf. *Enn.* V 4, 1 (II 234, 5–16 HENRY/SCHWYZER): Δεῖ μὲν γάρ τι πρὸ πάντων εἶναι ἀπλοῦν τοῦτο καὶ πάντων ἕτερον τῶν μετ' αὐτό, ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὄν, οὐ μεμιγμένον τοῖς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάλιν ἕτερον τρόπον τοῖς ἄλλοις παρεῖναι δυνάμενον, ὄν ὄντως ἓν, οὐχ ἕτερον ὄν, εἴτα ἓν, καθ' οὗ ψεῦδος καὶ τὸ ἐν εἶναι, οὐ μὴ λόγος μηδὲ ἐπιστήμη, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐπέκεινα λέγεται εἶναι τῆς οὐσίας – εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἀπλοῦν ἔσται συμβάσεως ἕξω πάσης καὶ συνθέσεως καὶ ὄντως ἓν, οὐκ ἂν ἀρχὴ εἴη – αὐταρκέστατον τε τῷ ἀπλοῦν εἶναι καὶ πρῶτον ἀπάντων ... τὸ δὴ τοιοῦτον ἓν μόνον δεῖ εἶναι. – There must be something simple before all things, and this must be other than all the things which come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things which derive from it, and all the same able to be present in a different way to these other things, being really one, and not a different being and then one; it is false even to say that it is one, and there is "no concept or knowledge" of it; it is indeed also said to be "beyond being." For if it is not to be simple, outside all coincidence and composition, it could not be a first principle; and it is the most self-sufficient, because it is simple and the first of all ... A reality of this kind must be one alone (Translation according to BUSSANICH, Plotinus's metaphysics of the One, as footnote 13 above, 42).

18 Cf. HALFWASSEN, Plotin und der Neuplatonismus (as footnote 12 above) 44–45.

19 Cf. F. SCHROEDER, Plotinus and language, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (as FOOTNOTE 11 above), 336–337.

20 *Enn.* VI 9, 5 (III 279, 30–33 HENRY/SCHWYZER): τὸ δὴ πρὸ τούτου θαῦμα τοῦ ἓν, ὃ μὴ ὄν ἐστίν, ἵνα μὴ καὶ ἐνταῦθα κατ' ἄλλου τὸ ἓν, ᾧ ὄνομα μὲν κατὰ ἀλήθειαν οὐδὲν προσήκον, εἴπερ δὲ δεῖ ὀνομάσαι, κοινῶς ἂν λεχθὲν προσηκόντως ἓν, οὐχ ὡς ἄλλο, εἴτα ἓν.

This exaltation of the apophatic method as the most adequate way of approaching God, while at the same time clearly implying a latent agnosticism in the name of transcendence,<sup>21</sup> has greatly influenced so called Christian Platonism in the figure of Ps. Dionysius, who introduced the notion of supreme abstraction (ὑπεροχική ἀφαίρεσις)<sup>22</sup> in order to outline the status of God beyond being. But although the absolute transcendence of God is conceived by Dionysius in the same way as Plotinus in terms of denying being and affirming God's existence beyond being (μὴ ὄν ὡς πάσης οὐσίας ἐπέκεινα),<sup>23</sup> the negation of any kind of positive thought about God is not *a priori* excluded, especially in relation to His beneficence, providence, and action towards creation.<sup>24</sup> Because of this fact, it is possible to make positive predications for God while at the same time denying all positive notions in regards to Him stating that He is nothing among beings.<sup>25</sup> The possibility of the kataphatic method when describing the outwards action of God towards creation, balanced with the apophatic way, radically differentiates Christianity from Neoplatonism, which clearly gives priority to the second.

After having made these clarifications and provided the reader with the main criteria according to which the text is to be evaluated, I will first quote the Photian text in Greek and then provide my own translation. The text is drawn from the edition of L. G. WESTERINK, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia, vol. V, Leipzig 1986.

21 Cf. HALFWASSEN, Aufstieg (as footnote 13 above) 114.

22 Cf. *De Divinis Nominibus* II 3, ed. B. R. SUCHLA. *Patristische Texte und Studien*, 33. Berlin 1990, 125, 16.

23 Cf. *Div. Nom.* I 1 (109, 16 SUCHLA) and II 5 (128, 17 – 129, 3 SUCHLA): ... καὶ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶ τὸ εἶναι καὶ οὐκ αὐτὸς τοῦ εἶναι ... Cf. *Enn.* VI 7, 38 (III 231, 1 HENRY/SCHWYZER): ἔστι δὲ οὐδὲ τὸ “ἔστιν”; VI 7, 38 (III 232, 11 HENRY/SCHWYZER): οὐκ ἔστι (sc. τὸ εἶν).

24 Cf. *Div. Nom.* V 2 (181, 8 – 15 SUCHLA): οὐ γὰρ ἐκφράσαι τὴν αὐτοῦπερούσιον ἀγαθότητα ... ἐπαγγέλεται (sc. ὁ λόγος) ... ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐκπεφασμένην ἀγαθοποιὸν πρόνοιαν, ὑπεροχικῶς ἀγαθότητα καὶ πάντων ἀγαθῶν αἰτίαν ὑμνεῖ (What I say does not promise to express the goodness, which in itself transcends being ... but praises the revealed well-doing providence as goodness in a supreme manner and as cause of all goods); V 1 (180, 9 – 13 SUCHLA): Τοσοῦτον δὲ ὑπομνήσωμεν, ὅτι τῷ λόγῳ σκοπὸς οὐ τὴν ὑπερούσιον οὐσίαν, ἣ ὑπερούσιος, ἐκφράζειν, ἄρρητον γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ ἀγνωστον ἐστὶ καὶ παντελῶς ἀνέκφραστον καὶ αὐτὴν ὑπεραίρον τὴν ἔνωσιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν οὐσιοποιὸν εἰς τὰ ὄντα πάντα τῆς θεαρχικῆς οὐσιαρχίας πρόδοον ὑμῆσαι ( But i will put also in mind that the purpose of my account is not to reveal that essence, which is beyond being, for this is something beyond words, something unknown and wholly unrevealed, something above unity itself. What i wish to do is to praise the being-grounding procession of the absolute divine source of being into the total domain of being).

25 Cf. *Div. Nom.* V 8 (187, 12 SUCHLA) : διὸ καὶ πάντα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἅμα κατηγορεῖται, καὶ οὐδὲν ἔστι τῶν πάντων.



## Text and translation

## Περὶ θεολογίας ζητήματα τῷ αὐτῷ

- Ἄρρητον μὲν τὸ θεῖον, ὥσπερ καὶ ἄληπτον, διότι μὴδ' ἔστιν μὴδ' ἐπινοίαις ψιλαῖς προϋφεστηκότα τινὰ λαβεῖν δι' ὧν ὁ λόγος προῖων τὴν γνώσιν καὶ κατάληψιν τοῦ μακαρίου ἐκείνου καὶ ἀφθέγκτου παράσχοι θεάματος· ἄρρητον δὲ καὶ ἄληπτον ὄν, ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστέρων ὅμως, ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τινος τῆς ἐκείθεν εἰ καὶ ἀμυδρὰς
- 5 ἀπαυγῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς κατιούσης καὶ δι' αὐτῶν ἡμῖν τὴν διάνοιαν ἐνατενίζειν πρὸς τὸ ἀμήχανον ἐκεῖνο κάλλος παρασκευαζούσης, δυνατὸν ἐστὶ τινας θεοπρεπεῖς φαντασίας εἰσδέξασθαι. καθ' ὃν γὰρ τρόπον οἱ ζόφῳ παχεῖ περικεχυμένῳ ἐγκαθήμενοι βραχεῖαν τινὰ τῶν ἡλιακῶν ἀκτίνων καὶ ἀμυδρὰν λαμπηδόνα παραδέχονται, οὕτως οἱ τῷ σαρκίῳ περικεκλεισμένοι ἐκ τῆς ἀπαυγῆς ἐκείνης τοῦ νοητοῦ
- 10 ἡλίου εἰς ἔννοιάν τινὰ καὶ φαντασίαν θεοπρεπῇ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τινος κατοπτρικοῦ μηχανήματος τοῦ τε πόθου καὶ τῆς συζητήσεως σκιοφανεῖς ἀκτῖνας ἔλκοντες, ἀνάγεσθαι δύνανται. ὃν μὲν οὖν διασφύζει λόγον ὁ ἥλιος ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς, τοιαύτην ἂν περὶ τοῦ θείου δύναται τις ἔννοιαν ὡς ἐξ εἰκόνος ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς δοῦναι καὶ λαβεῖν.
- 15 Ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἐξ ἀποφάσεως τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων εἰς θεωρίαν ἀναγόμεθα τῆς ἐξηρημένης τῶν ὄντων οὐσίας τε καὶ θεότητος· ὁ γὰρ μὴδὲν ἔστιν τῶν πάντων, κρεῖττον δὲ τοῦ παντός, τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη θεός, ὃς προήγαγέν τε ἐκ μὴ ὄντων εἰς τὸ εἶναι τὸ πᾶν καὶ τῆς τῶν προηγμένων διαμονῆς καὶ ἐναρμονίου κινήσεως τὴν πρόνοιαν ἔχει.
- 20 Καὶ πρό γε τούτων, ὅτι ἔστιν θεός, κοινῇ πᾶσιν ἐγκατέσπαρται ταῖς ἀνθρωπίναις διανοίαις, τῆς ἐκείθεν αὐγῆς ὡς δι' ἐμφάσεων διανιστώσης ἡμῶν τὸν νοῦν καὶ φωταγωγούσης, εἰ καὶ μὴ πρὸς τὸ εἰδέναί τι ποτέ ἐστιν θεός, ἀλλ' οὖν γε μὴ ἄγνοεῖν ὅτιπερ ὅλως ἐστίν. εἰ γὰρ πλῆθος ἅπαν, εἴτε τὴν τοῦ συνεχοῦς ὀνομασίαν δεχόμενον, εἴτε τῷ διωρισμένῳ περιγραφόμενον, ὥσπερ εἰς ἅπειρον δύναται
- 25 τέμνεσθαι καὶ σκεδάζεσθαι, οὕτω καὶ πρὸς ῥοὴν καὶ διαφθορὰν ἀποφέρεσθαι, μετοχῇ πάντως ἐνός τινος ἐξήρθη τοῦ μὴ ταῦτα παθεῖν αὐτίκα τοῦ προελθεῖν, ἀλλὰ μονῆς ἀπολαύειν καὶ συνοχῆς· μετοχῇ δ' ἐνός, οὐ τοῦ κυρίως καὶ ὑπερουσίῳ ἐνός, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ τμητὰ καὶ σκεδαστὰ οὐδὲ ῥεούσης ἂν ὅλως εἴησαν καὶ φθειρομένης φύσεως, ἀλλ' ἐνός μετοχῇ ὃ δὴ σκιάν τις ἀμυδρὰν εἰπὼν τοῦ κυρίως καὶ
- 30 ὑπερουσίῳ ἐνός ἐγγὺς ἂν εἰκασίας γένοιτο τῆς μὴδὲν ἀνατυπούμενης τολμηρόν. τοιοῦτον δὲ ἐστὶν τὸ παρ' ἡμῖν ἔν, οὗ καὶ τὸ πλῆθος ὥσπερ εἴρηται μετέχον τμητὸν μὲν ἐστὶν καὶ σκεδαστὸν καὶ ῥευστόν, οὕτω δὲ τῇ προόδῳ συνδιερρύηκεν, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ διατέτμηται. ταύτη τοι καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ πλῆθος, ἀόριστον ὃν καὶ ἀνείδεον τῇ γε φύσει τῇ οἰκείᾳ· ἐκείνου τε περιορίζεται καὶ εἰδοποιεῖται· τετράς
- 35 γὰρ καὶ ἐπτὰς καὶ δεκάς καὶ τριακάς τοῦ παρ' ἡμῖν ἐνός εἰσὶν ὥσπερ ἰνδάλματα καὶ προβολαί, τὸ πλῆθος ἐνοποιοῦσαι καὶ εἰδοποιοῦσαι καὶ περιορίζουσαι.



Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ εἰ τὸ ἡνωμένον ἅπαν οὐχ ἑαυτὸ ἐνοῖ, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐνότῃτι ἡνω-  
ται, καὶ αὐτὸ ἄρα τῇ τοῦ ἐνὸς μετοχῇ τὸ ἡνωμένον ἔχει σφωζόμενον, ἐνὸς δὲ κἀν-  
ταῦθα οὐ τοῦ κυρίως καὶ ὑπερουσίου ἐνός, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εἴρηται τοῦ ἀπολαύοντος  
40 τῆς ἐκεῖθεν σκιάς.

Ἔτι δὲ εἰ ἔστιν μὲν ἐν τοῖς οὖσι λαβεῖν τὸ ἄρχον καὶ τὸ ἀρχόμενον, καὶ αὐτὸ  
δὲ τὸ ἄρχον τὴν τοῦ ἀρχομένου τάξιν ὑποδυόμενον, δηλὸν ὅτι τὸ ἄρχον οὐκ ἂν  
εἴη κυρίως ἄρχον, διὰ τοῦ ἄρχεσθαι καθαιρούμενον τῆς ἀρχῆς· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ἔστιν  
τις ὑπερανφικισμένη καὶ ἀναρχος ἀρχή, ἐξ ἧς τὸ ἄρχον τὴν ἀμυδρὰν τοῦ εἰκάσμα-  
45 τος δεξάμενον σκιὰν τὴν σχέσιν εἰλκυσεν καὶ τὴν ὀνομασίαν τῆς ἀρχῆς.

Καὶ ἄλλως δέ, ὥσπερ ἔστιν τελευταῖον τι λαβεῖν ἀρχόμενον μόνον, οὐκ  
ἄρχον δέ, οὕτως ἔστιν ἀναθεωρεῖν ὡς ἔστιν τις ὑπερτάτη καὶ ἐξηρημένη τῶν  
ἄλλων ἀπάντων ἀναρχος ἀρχή, ἣτις ἂν ἐφαρμόζουσα εἴη τῇ ὑπὲρ νοῦν καὶ  
ὑπὲρ ἔννοιαν πᾶσαν θεότῃτι καὶ θεαρχίᾳ.

Εἰ δὲ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ τῶν ὄντων φύσει καὶ ἀγαθὸν εὑρεῖν, μᾶλλον δὲ πολλὰ καὶ  
ποικίλα τὰ ἀγαθὰ (ὃ γὰρ μὴ ἀπολαύει τινὸς ἀγαθότητος, ἀλλ' εἰς ἄκρατον ἦκει  
κακίας, οὐδ' ὑφ' ἐστάναι ὅλως δύναται· σκεδασθεῖη γὰρ ἂν αὐτίκα καὶ διαφθαρεῖη,  
εἴπερ ἢ φθορὰ καὶ ὁ σκεδασμὸς τοῦ κακοῦ), δηλὸν ὡς ἔστιν τὰ μὲν μᾶλλον, τὰ δ'  
ἥττον μετέχοντα τάγαθοῦ. εἰ δὲ ἔστιν τὰ μὲν μᾶλλον, τὰ δὲ ἥττον μετέχοντα  
55 τάγαθοῦ, οὐκ ἀμφίβολον οὐδ' ὅτι ἀπὸ τῶν μετασχόντων κατὰ πρώτην ἢ κατὰ  
δευτέραν ἢ καὶ κατ' ἄλλην τινὰ τάξιν ἀγαθύνεται τὰ μεταλαμβάνοντα· πάντα  
δ' ὅμως ὑπερανφικισμένης τινὸς ἀγαθότητος χορηγία καὶ ἀπολαύσει τὴν τοῦ ἀγα-  
θοῦ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς χάριν φέρει. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ἔστιν τις ἄρα ὑπεράγαθος ἀγαθότης, ἐξ  
ἧς τοῖς ἀγαθουμένοις ἢ τοῦ ἀγαθύνεσθαι κατὰ ἀναλογίαν τῶν δεχομένων  
60 παρέχεται δωρεά.

Ἐκ τοίνυν τῶν εἰρημένων φανερόν ἐστιν δυνατόν εἶναι θεωρίαν θηρᾶσαι  
τινα, ὅτι τε ἔστιν θεός, καὶ οὗτος ὑπερούσιον ἐν καὶ ὑπεράρχιος ἀρχὴ καὶ ὑπε-  
ράγαθος ἀγαθότης ὡς πηγὴ ἀγαθότητος. καὶ ἄλλων δ' ὥσπερ ἰνδαλμάτων  
τινῶν καὶ εἰκασμάτων, καθάπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἴρηται, δυναμένων ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστέρων  
65 παραληφθῆναι, δι' ὧν ἔστιν εἰς τὸ ἀμήχανον ἐκεῖνον καὶ ἀνέκφραστον κάλλος  
τῆς ὑπερουσίας καὶ ὑπερφυοῦς θεότητος ἐνατενίζειν, μάλιστα γὰρ καὶ ὅτι μηδὲ  
χαλεπὸν διὰ τῆς προειρημένης μεθόδου τοιαῦτα συλλέγειν, πρὸς γὰρ τὴν παροῦ-  
σαν χρεῖαν καὶ τὴν συνέχουσαν ἡμᾶς τῶν ὑπογραφῶν ἐρημίαν καὶ τῶν βιβλίων  
τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν ἱκανά σοι καὶ ταῦτα.

## Theological questions, to the same recipient

The deity is as well as incomprehensible, because one cannot by bare reasoning even grasp any pre-existing things whereby the mind by advancing might provide us with knowledge and understanding of that blessed and unutterable vi-

sion. But though it is ineffable and incomprehensible, yet it is possible from the posterior things, as from some radiance, however dim, from that source descending on them, and by them preparing our mind to gaze upon that unattainable beauty, to receive some notions worthy of God. In the same way that those who sit enshrouded in deep darkness receive some slight and dim illumination from the sun's rays, those enclosed in the flesh may, by drawing shadowy rays from their desire and (through) joint inquiry, as from some reflective device, be led up by that ray of the intelligible sun to a concept and thought worthy of God. The position, which the sun keeps permanently among perceptible things, a concept of this kind could be given and received of the Deity among intelligible things, as by way of an image.

On the other hand, by the negation of all beings we are led up to the understanding of the essence and godhead which surpasses beings. For what is not one of all the beings, but is superior to the universe, that is God, who both brought forth the universe from not being to being, and exercises providence over the preservation and harmonious movement of what he brought forth.

Even prior to that, the existence of God is implanted generally in the minds of all men, the ray from that source raising up and illuminating our mind as by representations, even though not so as to know what God might be, yet not so as to be unaware that he exists at all. For everything which constitutes a great quantity or number (a plurality), whether it is described as continuous or circumscribed by what defines it, can be as it were infinitely divided and fragmented, and thus swept to dissolution and destruction, by participation in a certain unity it is surely lifted up so as not to suffer these things as soon as it appears, but enjoys permanence and continuity. Participation in unity however is not participation in the absolute and transcendent One, since they would be neither divisible or capable of fragmentation nor would they at all be of a nature liable to dissolution and destruction; rather it is participation in a unity which, if one called it a dim shadow of the absolute and transcendent One, one might be near to a speculation that does not represent something rash. Such is the unity we are considering, where the participating plurality, as we have said, is liable to division, fragmentation and dissolution, but is not dissolved at its coming forth, as it is not divided up. In this way the plurality itself, while indefinite and formless in its proper nature, is defined and given form by that (unity); four, seven, ten and thirty are namely a kind of form and extension of the one we are dealing with, giving unity, form and definition to the plurality.

Likewise every united thing does not unite itself, but is united by the unity, and what is united is preserved by participation in the one; here again, it means participation, not in the absolute and transcendent One, but as we have said, it enjoys the shadow coming from it.

Further, it is possible to find among beings that which is origin and that which has an origin, and the origin itself is subject to the role of having been originated, then plainly what originates is not the absolute origin, since having been originated is (immediately) deposed of (its rank) being an origin. But if so, there is an Origin which resides above and is without origin, from which the origin that receives the dimly outlined shadow derives the status and title of origin.

Yet again, as it is possible to find something (among beings) in the lowest order, that only has an origin but is no origin so it is possible to conceive that there is some principle superior and beyond all other things, a principle without principle which would be applicable to the Deity and to divine origin which transcends mind and every thought.

If it is possible in the nature of beings also to find good, or rather many and varied goods (for what enjoys no goodness, but has reached undiluted evil, cannot exist at all; it would immediately be fragmented and destroyed, if indeed evil means destruction and fragmentation) – then plainly some things participate more, other less in the good. But if there are some that participate more, others less, in the good, then there can be no doubt that among those participating, those receiving the good in first, second and third degree, all receive the gift of good in themselves by the provision and enjoyment of some Goodness which dwells above. If so, then there is some supreme Goodness, which is beyond Goodness by which the gift of goodness is provided freely to those receiving goodness in due order.

From what has been said it is clearly possible to seek for some idea that God exists, and that he is the transcendent One and Origin beyond Origin, supremely good, the Good as fountain of goodness; because other (mental) images and comparisons, as was said at the beginning, being able to drawn from posterior things, whereby it is possible to gaze upon that unattainable and indescribable beauty of the transcendent and supreme Deity, may these remarks are enough for you especially since it is not very difficult to compile such things using the same method, given the present necessity and the constraint we suffer through the absence of secretaries and the lack of access to books.

## Analysis

Already at the beginning of his treatment, with the questions on “Theology,” Photius clarifies the status of the divine, stressing its ineffable and incomprehensible nature, a view which is widely seen not only in the writings of Plotinus,<sup>26</sup>

but also in the Areopagitic works<sup>27</sup> and those of Saint Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>28</sup> He also emphasizes the fact that human nature does not contain the capacity of understanding the precise being of God by means of pure reasoning (ἐπινοίας ψιλᾶς).<sup>29</sup> The question that is immediately raised is: If God is absolutely unknowable and ineffable, how we can talk about him, form concepts, or enunciate propositions about His nature? Photius sees no way for men to approach God unless he gives indications of His presence. For this reason he points out that although God is ineffable and inconceivable, he gives us signs from the things he has made, as from some radiance, however dim, so that we may form some kind of concept of Him and contemplate His unspeakable and extraordinary beauty (ἀμήχανον κάλλος).<sup>30</sup> Here, the reader encounters the expression ἐκ τῶν ὑστέρων. A very similar expression is also found in Plotinus namely that

**26** “ἄρρητον τῇ ἀληθείᾳ” Cf. *Enn.* V 3, 13 (II 225, 1 HENRY/SCHWYZER); V 5, 6 (II 246, 24 HENRY/SCHWYZER); VI 9, 5 (III 279, 31–32 HENRY/SCHWYZER); VI 9, 5 (III 279, 31–32 HENRY/SCHWYZER): οὐδὲν ὄνομα κατὰ ἀλήθειαν αὐτῷ (sc. Ἐν) προσήκον. On this adjective see J. WHITAKER, Ἄρρητος καὶ ἀκατονόμαστος, in: *Platonismus und Christentum, Festschrift für H. Dörrie. JbAC Ergänzungsband*, 1. Münster 1983, 303–306 [= IDEM, *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought*. London 1984, XII]. With regard to incomprehensibility: “οὐ μὲν αὐτὸ λέγομεν ... οὐδὲ νόησιν ἔχομεν αὐτοῦ”. Cf. *Enn.* V 3, 14 (II 227, 2–3 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

**27** Cf. *Div. Nom.* XIII 3 (229, 16 Suchla): ἄρρητος φύσις; *ibid.* I 1 (109, 15): ἀνωνυμία; I 5 (116, 5): ἄκλητον καὶ ὑπερώνυμον; I 6 (118, 2): ἀνώνυμον. Further *Div. Nom.* I 2 (110, 8), IX 3 (211, 5): ἀπερίληπτον; I 5 (116, 2): ἄληπτος; VII 1 (194, 3): ἀκατάληπτον.

**28** Cf. *In canticum canticorum* 3, ed. H. LANGERBECK. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 6. Leiden 1960, 85, 16: ἄρρητος φύσις; *Eun.* III/V 60, ed. W. JAEGER. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 2. Leiden 1960, 182, 13–14: ἄρρητον τε καὶ ἀνερμήνευτον; *Eun.* (182, 2 JAEGER): ἀκατονόμαστον; *Eun.* (182, 17 JAEGER): ἀνεκφώνητον; *Eun.* I 683 (GNO, 1. 222, 22–25 JAEGER): ἀφραστον τε καὶ ἀνεκφώνητον καὶ πάσης τῆς διὰ λόγων σημασίας ἀνώτερον, ἔν ὄνομα γνωριστικὸν τῆς ἰδίας ἔχοντα φύσεως, τὸ μόνον αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ πάντων εἶναι ὄνομα; Cf. also *Cant.* 3 (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 6. 89, 18 LANGERBECK): ἄληπτον; *Cant.* 6 (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 6. 182, 17); *Cant.* 1 (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 6. 37, 3): ἀκατάληπτον; *De Virginitate* 10, ed. J. P. CAVARNOS. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 8/1. Leiden 1952, 288, 21: τὸ καὶ λόγῳ ἄρρητον καὶ νοήματι ἀκατάληπτον.

**29** In respect to the notion of Epinoia see: T. KOBUSCH, Die Epinoia – das menschliche Bewusstsein in der antiken Philosophie, in L. Karfikova/S. Douglas/J. Zachuber, ed., *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium II. Proceedings of the 10th international Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, 82. Olomouc, September 15–18, 2004) 3–20; B. STUDER, Der theologiegeschichtliche Hintergrund der Epinoia-Lehre Gregors von Nyssa, *ibid.* 21–49; CH. APOSTOLOPOULOS, Die Rolle der Epinoia nach Eunomius und Gregor und die theologisch-philosophischen Hintergründe, *ibid.* 239–245; E. MOUTSOPOULOS, Epinoia et imaginaire chez Grégoire de Nysse, *ibid.* 363–375, and J. DEMETRAPOULOS, Glossogony or epistemology? The stoic character of Basil of Caesarea's and Eunomius' epistemological notion of ἐπίνοια and its misinterpretation by Gregory of Nyssa, *ibid.* 387–397.

**30** Cf. Plato, *Politeia* VI 509A6; Plotinus, *Enn.* V 5, 3 (II 242, 8 HENRY/SCHWYZER); Greg. Nyss., *De Virginitate*. 10, ed. J. P. CAVARNOS. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 8/1. Leiden 1952, 290, 4–5.

of ἐκ τῶν ὕστερον. Both formulations, although they are not verbally identical, are based on the same reasoning and intend to emphasize that everything that is said about God derives from that which comes after Him: Τὸ μὲν οὖν εἶναι, ὡς λέγομεν ἐκεῖνο εἶναι, ἐκ τῶν μετ' αὐτό.<sup>31</sup> [The being, whatever we say about it, that it exists, derives from that which comes after it. That means that the content of every speech about God derives not from God Himself, but from things that come from Him: ὥστε περὶ αὐτοῦ μὲν λέγειν, αὐτὸ δὲ μὴ λέγειν. Καὶ γὰρ λέγομεν, ὃ μὴ ἔστιν· ὃ δὲ ἔστιν, οὐ λέγομεν· ὥστε ἐκ τῶν ὕστερον περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγομεν.<sup>32</sup> [So, we speak about it (the One), but we do not declare it itself. And indeed we say what it is not; but what it (really) is, we do not say; so we speak about it from that which comes after it].

Every speech about the divine may discuss it, but never disclose it,<sup>34</sup> for in its transcendent nature it is absolutely unspeakable, unknowable, and incomprehensible.<sup>35</sup> God may become the object of our discussion, but this discussion is very limited as long as it is conducted from the perspective of beings: Ἐκ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων ἐναρμονίως ὑμνεῖται καὶ ὀνομάζεται.<sup>36</sup> This line of thinking is dominant in Dionysius as well. Dionysius teaches us that God is praised and named appropriately by the sum total of beings, making clear that affirmative theology and praise are possible. In this they indicate not what God really is, but rather something of God that is knowable.<sup>37</sup> This possibility of naming God and forming concepts about Him is neither contingent nor arbitrary. It is a product of the restricted perceptive and spiritual faculties of human beings who experience God's extroversion, his opening towards the world by extending his goodness.<sup>38</sup> This extroversion reveals a firm, transcendent beam, granting enlightenment proportionate to each being.<sup>39</sup> Human beings are only able to form

<sup>31</sup> *Enn.* VI 8, 11 (III 254, 7–8 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

<sup>32</sup> G. HUBER, *Das Sein und das Absolute. Studien zur Geschichte der ontologischen Problematik in der spätantiken Philosophie*. Basel 1955, 81.

<sup>33</sup> *Enn.* V 3, 14 (II 227, 6–8 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

<sup>34</sup> SCHROEDER, Plotinus and language (as footnote 19 above) 349.

<sup>35</sup> V 3, 14 (II 227, 1–3 HENRY/SCHWYZER): "Ἡ λέγομεν μὲν τι περὶ αὐτοῦ, οὐ μὴν αὐτὸ λέγομεν οὐδὲ γινώσκιν οὐδὲ νόησιν ἔχομεν αὐτοῦ.

<sup>36</sup> *Div. Nom.* I 7 (120, 7–8 SUCHLA); *ibid.* I 5 (117, 13 SUCHLA): ἐκ πάντων τῶν αἰτιατῶν ὑμνητέον.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ep.* I (ed. A. M. RITTER, in *PTS* 36, Berlin 1991, 156, 8–157, 1): Καὶ αὐτὸν ἐώρακεν, ἀλλὰ τι τῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν ὄντων καὶ γινωσκομένων.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Div. Nom.* IV 1 (143, 12–144, 1 SUCHLA): τάγαθὸν ὡς οὐσιώδες ἀγαθὸν εἰς πάντα τὰ ὄντα διατείνει τὴν ἀγαθότητα.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Div. Nom.* I 2 (110, 11–13 SUCHLA): Οὐ μὴν ἀκοινώνητόν ἐστιν καθόλου τάγαθὸν οὐδενὶ τῶν ὄντων, ἀλλ' ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μονίμως τὴν ὑπερούσιον ἰδρῶσαν ἀκτῖνα ταῖς ἐκάστου τῶν ὄντων

concepts and allowed to propose names of God on the basis of this enlightenment. God can only be approached if God himself takes the initiative to extend himself to beings. This Areopagitic position coincides totally with the views of Photius, who says that it is possible to form concepts, notions, and names that can fittingly be ascribed to God only from a dim enlightenment that comes down to us. Exactly the same view is to be found in later Neoplatonism (e.g., in Proclus), who probably inspired the work of Dionysius. From this self-sharing that comes down to us, says Proclus, we ascribe to God a variety of names such as the Good and the One.<sup>40</sup> That is to say: Every name we ascribe to God is an interpretation of his action towards us. His action *ad extra* gives us the spur to speak about Him. In this context we should also not forget Photius's and Dionysius's indebtedness to the Cappadocian Church fathers vis-à-vis the condescension and descent (ἀπαυγής... κατιούσης) of the divine to the realm of beings, which occurs without loss of transcendence (a concept shared by both Dionysius and Photius). This view is to be found in Basil of Caesarea's famous formulation: Ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐκ μὲν τῶν ἐνεργειῶν γνωρίζειν λέγομεν τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν, τῇ δὲ οὐσίᾳ αὐτῇ προσεγγίζειν οὐχ ὑπισχνούμεθα. Αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐνέργειαι αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἡμᾶς καταβαίνουσιν, ἡ δὲ οὐσία αὐτοῦ μένει ἀπρόσιτος.<sup>41</sup> ("We do indeed say that we know our God from his operations-energies, but we are not enabled to draw near the essence itself; for, while his energies come down to us, his essence abides inaccessible").

The second basic element that demonstrates the essential connection between Photius and Plotinian-Areopagitic thought refers to the path of negation that re-charts the ascent of finite beings that seek to return to their single source and origin through an inherent and creaturely impulse. More specifically, it reflects the movement of human thought from diversity to simplicity, from participation to presence, from limitation to transcendence, from the manifold towards unity, with the intention of contemplating (εἰς θεωρίαν) the essence and deity which is beyond all beings.<sup>42</sup> In the speculation of Plotinus, the absolute tran-

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ἀναλόγοις ἐλλάμψεσιν ἀγαθοπρεπῶς ἐπιφαίνεται ... See also C. SCHÄFER, *Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite. An introduction to the structure and the content of the treatise on the Divine Names. Philosophia antiqua*, 99. Leiden/Boston 2006, 67–68.

<sup>40</sup> *In Platonis theologiam* II 9, ed. H. D. Saffrey / L. G. Westerink. Paris 1974, 60, 23–25: τὸ μὲν οὖν ἔν καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐκ τῆς εἰς ἅπαντα τὰ ὄντα καθηκούσης ἀπ' αὐτοῦ δόσεως ἐπ' αὐτὸ μετέγμεν. On this issue see also TH. ALEXOPOULOS, Inwieweit ist die Synthese zwischen Neuplatonismus und Christentum in der philosophisch-theologischen Position des Dionysius Areopagita gelungen? *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 8 (2009) 119–138.

<sup>41</sup> *Ep.* 234 (to Amphilochius of Iconium), PG 32, 869B.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. F. O'ROURKE, Pseudo-Dionysius and the metaphysics of Aquinas. *Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters*, 32. Leiden 1992, 15–16.

scendence of the One is conceived of as the denial of every name of God. The clear priority of the path of negation can clearly be seen in the constant incitation of Plotinus: ἄφελε πάντα<sup>43</sup> [remove – take away every (name) from the One]. This statement emphasizes the transcendence of everything through the negation of everything.<sup>44</sup> Plotinus insists on adding nothing to the One, as this would otherwise create the danger of being double.<sup>45</sup> Every addition to the One erases its absolute simplicity.<sup>46</sup> Even the name of “the One,” which we ascribe to it, has a negative character, for it is simply the negation in respect to plurality.<sup>47</sup> The way of negation has a concrete goal – to lift the One from the sphere of beings. This is why negation stands above all else. While affirmative expressions designate the One by means of definitions applied to beings, the negative one reveals its supremacy over the beings.<sup>48</sup>

Based on the prior apophatic tradition of the church fathers, and influenced by Neoplatonic views, Dionysius attaches great significance to the method of apophasis (yet without neglecting the value of kataphatic speech!). Therefore he states: “We do not even attribute the name of Goodness to it as appropriate; but with a desire<sup>49</sup> to think and speak of its ineffable nature we consecrate to it the most sacred of names. Here we are in agreement with those who proclaim God; but since we leave the truth of the matter far behind, they also have chosen the ascent through negation.”<sup>50</sup> “Negations concerning divine things are true

<sup>43</sup> *Enn.* V 3, 17 (II 233, 38 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

<sup>44</sup> HALFWASSEN, *Aufstieg* (as footnote 13 above) 97.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Enn.* V 5, 4 (II 243, 8–10 HENRY/SCHWYZER): Χρή τοίνυν ἐνταῦθα ῥῆξι πρὸς ἓν, καὶ μηδὲν αὐτῷ ἔτι προσθεῖναι, ἀλλὰ στήναι παντελῶς δεδιότα αὐτοῦ ἀποστατήσαι μηδὲ τουλάχιστον μηδὲ εἰς δύο προελθεῖν. See also *Enn.* VI 8, 21 (III 269, 24–28 HENRY/SCHWYZER) and Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* II 10 (63, 13–16 SAFFREY/WESTERINK): καὶ ὡς μένειν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀποφάσεων προσήκει τῷ Πλάτῳ πειθομένους καὶ μηδὲν τῷ ἐνὶ προστιθέντας· ὁ γὰρ ἂν προσθῆς ἐλαττοῖς τὸ ἓν, καὶ οὐχ ἓν αὐτὸ λοιπὸν ἀποφαίνεται ἀλλὰ πεπονθὸς τὸ ἓν.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* II 2 (23, 9–12 SAFFREY/WESTERINK): ἔστιν ἄρα τὸ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων αἴτιον ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν πᾶσαν καὶ χωριστὸν ἀπάσης οὐσίας, καὶ οὔτε οὐσίαν οὔτε προσθήκην τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχον· ἡ γὰρ τοιαύτη πρόσθεσις ἐλάττωσις ἐστὶ τῆς ἀπλότητος καὶ τοῦ ἓν. (It is thus the cause of all being, above any being and completely separate from any being; It contains being not as being and not as addition. For such an addition is a reduction of simplicity and unity). Plotinus gives great emphasis to the simplicity of the One: See *Enn.* V 3, 13 (II 227, 34 HENRY/SCHWYZER): τὸ ἀπλούστατον; V 3, 16 (II 230, 16 HENRY/SCHWYZER): τὸ ὄντως ἀπλοῦν; V 3, 11 (II 223, 27 HENRY/SCHWYZER): τὸ πάντῃ ἀπλοῦν.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Enn.* V 5, 6 (II 246, 26 HENRY/SCHWYZER): ἄρσιν ἔχει πρὸς τὰ πολλὰ.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. HUBER, *Sein* (as footnote 33 above) 84.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Photius, *Amph.* 180 (V 232, 13 WESTERINK): τοῦ τε πόθου καὶ τῆς συζητήσεως.

<sup>50</sup> *Div. Nom.* XIII 3 (229, 15–230, 2 Suchla): Καὶ οὐδὲ αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς ἀγαθότητος ὡς ἐφαρμόζοντες αὐτῇ προσφέρομεν, ἀλλὰ πόθῳ τοῦ νοεῖν τι καὶ λέγειν περὶ τῆς ἀρρήτου φύσεως



(ἀληθεῖς), but affirmations are unsuitable (ἀνάρμοστοι) for the hidden nature of the ineffable... Therefore we may celebrate the divine realities with true negations.”<sup>51</sup> Dionysius goes one step further than the prior tradition of the church fathers when he follows the Plotinian concept of the One and declares the inadequacy even of negation to express the supremacy of God. Applying even negative attributes to God is an activity of the human intellect. But God is beyond reason and consequently beyond affirmation and negation as functions of reason. So we must choose to transcend rational thought, which implies apophatic speech as well. God’s absolute transcendence defies even the apophatic path, a principle affirmed by Dionysius when he denies his denials: “There is no speaking of it, (sc. the divine) neither name nor knowledge of it. Darkness and light, error and truth – it is none of these. It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its preeminently simple and absolute nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation; it is also beyond every denial.”<sup>52</sup> The most appropriate way to express moving beyond the bounds of both kataphasis and apophasis is thus the way of the “Theology of Supremacy” or of “Transcending” (ὑπεροχικὴ ἀφαίρεσις).<sup>53</sup> This kind of aphaeresis states the hyper-having, namely the having something in excessive measure. It connotes a sense of complete separation or total removal of positive properties (that are attributed to God as being their cause) such as knowledge, motion, life etc. from God interpreting these removed properties hyperochically (in a sense of overflowing superabundance) rather than privatively.<sup>54</sup> To name God as ὑπερούσιον, ὑπεράγαθον, ὑπεράγνωστον etc. is to remove these names (in their non *hyper*-prefixed form) from God in a

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ἐκείνης τῷ τῶν ὀνομάτων σεπτότατον αὐτῇ πρώτως ἀφιερῶμεν. Καὶ συμφωνήσοιμεν ἂν κἀν τούτῳ τοῖς θεολόγοις, τῆς δὲ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀληθείας ἀπολειφθῶμεθα. Διὸ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν διὰ τῶν ἀποφάσεων ἄνοδον προτετιμῆκασιν ... Trans. from O’ROURKE, Pseudo-Dionysius (as footnote 43 above) 16.

51 Cf. CH II 3 (ed. G. HEIL, in PTS 36, Berlin 1991, 13, 1–2); II 5 (ibid. 16, 4).

52 *De mystica theologia* 5 (150, 3–9 RITTER): οὐτε λόγος αὐτῆς ἐστὶν οὐτε ὄνομα οὐτε γνῶσις· οὐτε σκότος ἐστὶν οὐτε φῶς οὐτε πλάνη οὐτε ἀλήθεια· οὐτε ἐστὶν αὐτῆς καθόλου θέσις, οὐτε ἀφαίρεσις, ἀλλ’ τῶν μετ’ αὐτὴν τὰς θέσεις καὶ τὰς ἀφαιρέσεις ποιοῦντες αὐτὴν οὐτε τίθεμεν οὐτε ἀφαιροῦμεν· ἐπεὶ καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν θέσιν ἐστὶν ἡ παντελής καὶ ἐνιαία τῶν πάντων καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἀφαίρεσιν ἡ ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ πάντων ἀπλῶς ἀπολελυμένου καὶ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὅλων. Trans. from J. FISCHER, The theology of dissimilarity: negation in Pseudo-Dionysius. *Journal of Religion* 81 (2001) 534.

53 See footnote 22.

54 See T. KNEPPER, Not not: the method and logic of Dionysian negation. *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82/4 (2008) 619–637, 635–636.

*hyperochic* manner. To remove *hyperochically* is therefore to equate *not*-property with *hyper*-property. To remove *hyperochically* is to remove *apophatically*.<sup>55</sup> Such kind of speech merely attempts to point out that God in his absolute transcendence is totally independent of His subsequents and superior to them as their cause.

Photius unswervingly maintains this line of reasoning concerning the absolute supra-essentiality (ὑπερουσιότης) of God through negations. He emphatically stresses the point when he designates the deity as something that “is nothing of all things” (μηδέν ἐστι τῶν πάντων).<sup>56</sup> This expression has Photius most probably drawn from Dionysios Areopagites.<sup>57</sup> Here we should point out that this expression is abundantly used by the later neoplatonists Proclus and Damascius, on whom the Dionysian author is more likely to have drawn than on Plotinus. Irrespective of this fact one should focus on the conceptual consistency of the byzantine Theology of the ninth century with the views of the early Neoplatonism. For, Plotinus also conceives of the One as the supreme cause transcendent in respect to its participants, subsisting apart from them and prior in respect to them. The One is totally transcendent, regardless of its universal presence that results from its causality (οὐδέν τῶν πάντων, ἀλλὰ πρὸ τῶν πάντων).<sup>58</sup> In regards to negative expression, this does not mean that the One does not exist at all or that it is nothing. Instead, negative expression is indicative of the supremacy of the One (ὑπεροχῆς σημαντικόν).<sup>59</sup> Without a clear definition, it not only shows clearly that the One can neither be defined nor named, but also that it is beyond any definition and any name.<sup>60</sup>

The fourth and the fifth elements are to be found between the lines 233, 25–45 in the text of the critical edition, and refer to the notions of multiplicity and unity. According to Photius, multiplicity has the following basic characteristics:

- 1) It is confined within certain limits (τῷ διωρισμένῳ περιγραφόμενον).

<sup>55</sup> See *ibid.*, 636.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Amph.* 180 (V, 232, 18–19).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Div. Nom.* V 8 (187, 13 SUCHLA): διὸ καὶ πάντα αὐτοῦ ἅμα κατηγορεῖται καὶ οὐδέν ἐστι τῶν πάντων.

<sup>58</sup> *Enn.* III 8, 9 (PO I, 374, 53–54 HENRY/SCHWYZER). See also V 1, 7 (II 196, 19 HENRY/SCHWYZER); μηδέν τῶν πάντων; V 3, 13 (II 226, 4 HENRY/SCHWYZER): οὔτε τι τῶν πάντων; V 4, 2 (II 237, 40–41 HENRY/SCHWYZER): πρὸ πάντων. See C. COSTA, Plotinus and later Platonic philosophers on the causality of the first principle, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (as note 11 above), 362. For further quotations see HALFWASSEN, *Aufstieg* (as footnote 13 above) 176. In respect to this issue see also: W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt 1979) 348–357.

<sup>59</sup> So Proclus *In Parm.* 1110, 6. Cf. HALFWASSEN, *Aufstieg* (as footnote 13 above) 176.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. HALFWASSEN, *ibid.* 175.

2) It can be divided, scattered, and consequently be led to destruction (τμητόν, σκεδαστόν, ρευστόν... οὕτω καὶ πρὸς τὴν φθορὰν ἀποφέρεσθαι). This possibility implies the radical ontological deficiency of its nature.

3) Unity is its basic condition. By participating in it, multiplicity can maintain its coherence (συννοχή) and thus remain in existence.

4) Multiplicity partakes of unity, but not of what exists primarily and is supraessential. Such unity it is beyond participation and beyond any kind of numeration. The unity of which the multiplicity partakes is a faint shadow (σκιὰ τις ἀμυδρά) of the primary unity, which transcends being (τοῦ κυρίως καὶ ὑπερουσίου ἑνός).

All these elements can be better understood and evaluated if they are examined in light of Plotinus' thinking. For Plotinus, multiplicity is characterized by fundamental ontological deficiency:<sup>61</sup> Δεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἰκανώτατον ὄν ἀπάντων καὶ αὐταρκέστατον καὶ ἀνεκδεέστατον εἶναι· πᾶν δὲ πολὺ καὶ μὴ ἓν ἐκδεές ἐκ πολλῶν γεγόμενον. Δεῖται οὖν αὐτοῦ ἢ οὐσία ἓν εἶναι· τὸ δὲ οὐ δεῖται ἑαυτοῦ· αὐτὸ γάρ ἐστι. Καὶ μὴν πολλὰ ὄν τοσούτων δεῖται, ὅσα ἔστι, καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὄν καὶ οὐκ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἐκδεές τῶν ἄλλων ὑπάρχον καὶ καθ' ἓν καὶ κατὰ τὸ ὅλον τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐκδεές παρέχεται. Εἴπερ οὖν δεῖ τι αὐταρκέστατον εἶναι, τὸ ἓν εἶναι δεῖ τοιοῦτον ὄν μόνον οἷον μήτε πρὸς αὐτὸ μήτε πρὸς ἄλλο ἐκδεές εἶναι.<sup>62</sup> [For, It (sc. the One) must be the most entire of all things and most self-sufficient and least in need; all that is plural and not one is needy since it became (one) from many. So its essence needs the one in order to be unity. On the other side, the One does not need himself, for it is what it is. Indeed, being many, it needs just as much as it is, and being each of the things in it along with the other things, and not being of itself in need of the others, it provides both individually and all together such as is needed. If therefore something needs to be self-sufficient, it must be the One, being only such as is in want neither in itself nor in relation to another].

Plotinus draws our attention to the inherent deficiency of every multiplicity in two ways: 1) Multiplicity needs the presence of its instances in order to be what it is, namely, a whole that consists of smaller parts. 2) Each of these parts does not possess independent existence; these parts do not simply coexist, but each stands in need of the existence of all other parts and has its being only within the whole.<sup>63</sup> The nature of multiplicity is thus deeply dependent on a cer-

<sup>61</sup> Cf. K. H. VOLKMANN-SCHLUCK, Plotin als Interpret der Ontologie Platons. *Philosophische Abhandlungen*, 10. Frankfurt 1966, 71.

<sup>62</sup> *Enn.* VI 9, 6 (III 280, 17 – 281, 26 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. VOLKMANN-SCHLUCK, Plotin (as footnote 62 above) 71 – 72. See also HALFWASSEN, Aufstieg (as footnote 13 above) 69.

tain unity. Without this unity it loses its coherence and cannot continue to exist. This fact itself completely implies its ontological deficiency. Furthermore, it implies the existence of a totally self-sufficient and independent principle from which stems every being. This must be only the absolute One, for it contains in itself no kind of multiplicity and its existence depends on nothing else except itself.<sup>64</sup> In full contradiction to the absolute unity of the One, the Manifold appears to be ontologically lacking, for it is dependent on unity, namely on the unity of its parts. Unity is therefore considered to be the main condition for being. But how are the ideas of a “manifold unity” and that of the supra-essential “One” connected? Plotinus clarifies this question by observing the reality of beings. Every being exists only through the One.<sup>65</sup> “For, nothing is existent that is not one.”<sup>66</sup> This means that the essence of being is founded on its being-in-unity. Being only exists as long as it is one, and the fact that it exists is based on the fact that it is one.<sup>67</sup> If every being did not participate in the unity, that is to say, it was not one, it would not exist at all; it would disappear from being. So every being is what it is only through this, namely, that it is one. It owes its essential property of being to its character as unity.<sup>68</sup> However, the being is not by itself one, but only through participation;<sup>69</sup> it has the character of a posterior, and not of an absolute and primary unity.<sup>70</sup> It bears in it the image, i.e., the trace, of the transcendent One (ἄγαλμα ἢ ἵχνος τοῦ ἐνός).<sup>71</sup> Through its nature it provides an indication for the One, it is similar (ὁμοιον)<sup>72</sup> to the One, it is manifestation of the One, but it is not the One itself, for it is not absolute unity.<sup>73</sup> It is only a faint shadow of the supra-essential One. The One must be itself (as absolute simple One) without any relation, existing only for itself if It is to be man-

64 Ibid. 1992, 70 with reference to *Enn.* VI 9, 6 (III 281, 24–30 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

65 Cf. *Enn.* VI 9, 1 (III 271, 1 HENRY/SCHWYZER): πάντα τὰ ὄντα τῷ ἐνί ἐστὶν ὄντα.

66 *Enn.* VI 6, 1 (III 171, 50–51 HENRY/SCHWYZER): οὐδὲν γὰρ ὄν, ὃ μὴ ἐν.

67 HALFWASSEN, *Aufstieg* (as footnote 13 above) 38.

68 Ibid. 39 with reference to HUBER, *Sein* (as footnote 33 above) 43.

69 Cf. *Amph.* (V 233, 42 WESTERINK): μετοχῇ ... ἐνός. Cf. *Enn.* V 5, 4 (II 242, 3 HENRY/SCHWYZER): πολλὰ ὄντα μετοχῇ ἐνός ἐν. Cf. also Dion. Areop., *Div. Nom.* XIII 2 (227, 7–8 Suchla): οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔστι τῶν ὄντων ἀμέτοχον τοῦ ἐνός.

70 Cf. Plato *Soph.* 245a; *Parm.* 157c, 158a. Cf. HALFWASSEN, *Aufstieg* (as footnote 13 above) 40.

71 *Enn.* III 8, 11 (I 376, 19 HENRY/SCHWYZER): ἵχνος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; see also V 5, 10 (II 251, 2 HENRY/SCHWYZER); V 1, 6 (II 193, 14 HENRY/SCHWYZER): ἄγαλμα τὸ πρῶτον.

72 *Enn.* V 6, 3 (II 259, 9 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

73 Cf. HALFWASSEN, *Aufstieg* (as footnote 13 above) 1992, 77.

ifested in something else. There is no *unum coadunatum* without the *Unum superexaltatum*.<sup>74</sup>

This important view becomes clearer when Photius provides us with the example of number. What is number? It is a multiplicity consisting of unities, or a composition of unities.<sup>75</sup> Every numeral unity is an image, i.e., a projection, of the transcendent One.<sup>76</sup> While the unity is the beginning of every number (in every number the unity is the constructive element), the transcendent One cannot be considered as a numerable (ἐνάρημον), as the principle of every number. If it would be a numerable principle, then any additional unique definition would immediately cause a duality, of which every part would be only one, but not the absolutely simple One.<sup>77</sup> For as the parts of the duality both should be posterior to the simple One, a fact that would carry the consequence that the simple and first One, by Its entry into the duality, would be transformed into something that was originated or derived and consequently no longer the simple One.<sup>78</sup> The absolutely simple One is thus not commensurable with any number. It belongs neither to the arithmetic sequence nor to any process of numeration or calculation.<sup>79</sup> Accordingly, the One cannot be added to another one or to any other number, for It is beyond any notion of number. In the last chapter of *De Divinis Nominibus*, Dionysius will point out, in full accordance with the view of Plotinus, that the supra-essential One defines being-as-one (ἐν ὄν) and every number as well, and that It itself is principle, cause, number and order of the number and of every being.<sup>80</sup> It is before every one (πρὸ παντός ἐνός) and beyond the one-being (καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν ὄν).<sup>81</sup>

74 Ibid. 1992, 77: ἐν μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων and ἐν αὐτὸ καθ' ἑαυτό.

75 Cf. *Amph. Q.* 180 (V 233, 38–40 WESTERINK).

76 Cf. *Amph. Q.* 180 (V 233, 39–40 WESTERINK).

77 Cf. *Enn.* V 5, 4 (II 243, 20–25 HENRY/SCHWYZER): Ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ ἐν τοῖς τοῦ ποσοῦ ἀριθμοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἐν τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτῶν ἀπομμουμένη τὴν ἐν τοῖς προτέροις ἀριθμοῖς φύσιν πρὸς τὸ ὄντως ἐν οὐκ ἀναλίσκουσα τὸ ἐν οὐδὲ κερματίζουσα τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχει, ἀλλὰ δυάδος γενομένης ἔστι μονὰς ἢ πρὸ τῆς δυάδος, καὶ οὐχ ἡ ἐν τῇ δυάδι μονὰς ἑκατέρω οὐδ' ἑτέρα ἐκείνη.

78 Cf. D. ROLOFF, Plotin. Die Großschrift III 8 – V, 8 – V, 5 – II 9. *Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte*, 8. Berlin 1970, 109.

79 Ibid. 109–110. See *Enn.* V 5, 4 (II 243 8–16 HENRY/SCHWYZER): Χρὴ τοίνυν ἐνταῦθα ῥῆσαι πρὸς ἐν, καὶ μηδὲν αὐτῷ ἔτι προσθεῖναι, ἀλλὰ στήναι παντελῶς δεδιότα αὐτοῦ ἀποστατήσαι μηδὲ τουλάχιστον μηδὲ εἰς δύο προελθεῖν. Εἰ δὲ μή, ἔσχεος δύο, οὐκ ἐν οἷς τὸ ἐν, ἀλλὰ ἄμφω ὕστερα. Οὐ γὰρ θέλει μετ' ἄλλου οὔτε ἐνός οὔτε ὅποσουοῦν συναριθμεῖσθαι οὐδ' ὅλως ἀριθμεῖσθαι· μέτρον γὰρ αὐτὸ καὶ οὐ μετρούμενον, καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις δὲ οὐκ ἴσον, ἵνα σὺν αὐτοῖς· εἰ δὲ μή, κοινόν τι ἔσται ἐπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν συναριθμουμένων, κάκεῖνο πρὸ αὐτοῦ· δεῖ δὲ μηδέν.

80 Cf. *Div. Nom.* XIII 3 (229, 3–5 SUCHLA).

81 Cf. *Div. Nom.* XIII 3 (228, 21–229, 1 SUCHLA).

The next important element that can be drawn from this passage refers to the notion of *Arché*. By observing beings, Photius postulates a relation between something that is origin and something that is originated (ἄρχον καὶ ἀρχόμενον).<sup>82</sup> This distinction within beings provides us with an indication of the existence of a supreme and transcendent cause, free from all finitude of Being (ὑπερτάτη καὶ ἐξηρημένη ἀπάντων),<sup>83</sup> whose nature transcends the limitations that define how we conceive things. Photius characterizes this as unoriginated origin (ἀναρχος ἀρχή).<sup>84</sup> The adjective ἐξηρημένη<sup>85</sup> is widely used in the Areopagitic works, including the use of the so-called *via superlativa* with respect to the notion of *Arché*. God is a principle beyond principle (ὑπεράρχιος ἀρχή),<sup>86</sup> a principle that transcends being (ὑπερούσιος ἀρχή).<sup>87</sup> As mentioned before, the prefix ὑπέρ actually has a negative meaning and it is used to overcome opposites, such as *Arché* and *Telos*. If every name ascribed to God is predicated by transference of human notions, from the creatures to the Creator, and if nothing from these names we attribute to God is worthy of Him because of the limited character of human language, then anything predicated of Him can be set

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Amph. Q.* 180 (V, 233, 45 WESTERINK).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Amph. Q.* 180 (V 233, 52 WESTERINK).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Amph. Q.* 180 (V 233, 53 WESTERINK).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *Div. Nom.* I 2 (110, 6 SUCHLA); I 4 (115, 12 SUCHLA); *CH* III 2 (19, 8 HEIL); *CH* IV 8 (100, 25 HEIL).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *Div. Nom.* I 3 (112, 3 SUCHLA); XI 6 (222, 15 SUCHLA); *CH* VII 4 (32, 11 HEIL); IX 1 (*PTS* 36, 36, 7 HEIL); X 1 (40, 10 HEIL); *Ep.* 2 (158, 8 RITTER).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Div. Nom.* XI 6 (222, 8 SUCHLA); *CH* VIII 2 (34, 12 HEIL); IX 2 (36, 17 HEIL); XIV (50, 11 HEIL).

forth as an example – i.e., it has the function of metaphor.<sup>88</sup> Thus God is called Essence or *Arché*, but strictly speaking He is neither Essence nor *Arché*. He is called by these Names from the horizon, from the perspective of beings. This means that the notions of *Arché* or cause are usable and predicable only with the reservation and caution that they are true “from us,” i.e., from our point of view, since they simply express the relation of the Other towards God and not God Himself.<sup>89</sup> “For God himself is related to nothing, but everything else is related to Him.”<sup>90</sup> God also remains beyond any notion of causality and is completely transcendent. This view is expressed by Neoplatonism with a variety of phrases that deny any notion of “principle of being” for the One. So the One is called τὸ πρὸ ἀρχῆς,<sup>91</sup> προαίτιον,<sup>92</sup> ἀναιτίως αἴτιον,<sup>93</sup> ὑπὲρ αἴτιον.<sup>94</sup>

By the time one finishes Photius’ passage, the reader is struck by the full coincidence of his views with those of the Platonic-Areopagitic tradition in respect to the notion of evil. This tradition insists on God’s utter Goodness. As undivided Goodness, He cannot even be the source of any evil in what He creates.<sup>95</sup> This tenet prevails in Photian thought, in which we can recognize many Areopagitic elements, especially from Dionysius’ treatise *On the Divine Names*.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. M.T. TOMASIC, The Logical Function of Metaphor and Oppositional Coincidence in the Pseudo-Dionysius and Johannes Scottus Eriugena. *Journal of Religion* 68 (1988) 361–376: 367.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. W. BEIERWALTES, Denken des Einen. Studien zur neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte. Frankfurt 1985, 42. See also IDEM, Identität und Differenz. *Philosophische Abhandlungen*, 40. Frankfurt 1972, 136–138. See HALFWASSEN, Aufstieg (as footnote 13 above) 108.

<sup>90</sup> *Enn.* III 9, 9 (I 381, 2–3 HENRY/SCHWYZER): περὶ οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτὸ τὸ πρῶτον, τὰ ἄλλα δὲ περὶ αὐτό. See HALFWASSEN, Aufstieg (as footnote 13 above) 108.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *Enn.* V 5. 9 (II 250, 7–8 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Proclus, *In Parm.* 1210, 11; *Theol. Plat.* II 9, 59, 24 (SAFFREY/WESTERINK).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* II 9, 58, 24 (SAFFREY/WESTERINK).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Proclus, *In Parm.* 1123, 37; *ibid.* 1124, 22–26: πάντα γὰρ ὡς αὐτοῦ (sc. τοῦ ἐνός) πρὸς αὐτὸ διὰ τούτων ἀποφασκόμενα ... οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀρχή, καθάπερ εἶπομεν, οὐδὲ μέσον, οὐδὲ τέλος. See HALFWASSEN, Aufstieg (as footnote 13 above) 109.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Plato, *Politeia* 279ab: “But this very thing, the patterns or norms of right speech about the gods, what would they be? – Something like this, I said. – The true quality of God we must always surely attribute to him whether we compose in epic, melic, or tragic verse. – We must. – And is not God of course good in reality and always to be spoken of as such? – Certainly. – But further, no good thing is harmful, is it? – I think not. – Can what is not harmful harm? – By no means. – Can that which does not harm do any evil? – Not that either. – But that which does no evil would not be cause of any evil either? – How could it? – Once more, is the good beneficent? – Yes. – It is the cause, then, of welfare? – Yes. – Then the good is not the cause of all things, but of things that are well it the cause: of things that are ill it is blameless. – Entirely so”, etc. Trans. by SCHÄFER, *Philosophy* (see footnote 40 above) 133.



In the text in question we recognize conceptual as well verbal coincidences, such as the concept that the nature of evil is to disperse and destroy the substance of things:

#### Photius

“Ὁ γὰρ μὴ ἀπολαύει τινὸς ἀγαθότητος, ἀλλ’ εἰς ἄκρατον ἦκει κακίας οὐδ’ ὑφεστάναι ὅλως δύναται· σκεδασθεῖη γὰρ ἂν αὐτίκα καὶ διαφθαρεῖη, εἴπερ ἡ φθορὰ καὶ ὁ σκεδασμὸς τοῦ κακοῦ.”<sup>96</sup>

What enjoys no goodness, but has reached undiluted evil, cannot exist at all; it would immediately be fragmented and destroyed, if indeed evil means destruction and fragmentation.

#### Dionysius

Τὸ κακόν, ἢ κακόν, οὐδεμίαν οὐσίαν ἢ γένεσιν ποιεῖ, μόνον δὲ κακύνει καὶ φθείρει... τὴν τῶν ὄντων ὑπόστασιν.<sup>97</sup>

Evil qua evil produces no being or generation, but only corrupts and destroys... the being of things that are.

Φύσις γὰρ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ παράγειν καὶ σώζειν, τῷ δὲ κακῷ τὸ φθείρειν καὶ ἀπολύειν.<sup>98</sup>

It is the nature of the good to produce and preserve, that of evil to destroy and dissolve.

Τὸ γὰρ πάντῃ ἄμοιρον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, οὐτε ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν ἔσται.<sup>99</sup>

What is entirely without participation in the good would also not exist.

The second idea, which inevitably draws our attention, is that of being lacking goodness, which is considered to be unable to preserve its existence within the being and finally as non-being. As non-being, it is characterized as evil both by Photius and Dionysius. Both ascribe to it a parasitic existence, which they define as “parhypostasis,”<sup>100</sup> a bare “by-being”, i.e., something which is not a principal hypostasis existing on its own and for its own sake, but dependent upon the existence of other things, namely, of the good.<sup>101</sup> In reality, evil is

<sup>96</sup> *Amph. Q.* 180 (V, 233, 36–38 WESTERINK).

<sup>97</sup> *Div. Nom.* IV 20 (164, 22–165, 2 SUCHLA).

<sup>98</sup> *Div. Nom.* IV 19 (163, 11–12 SUCHLA).

<sup>99</sup> *Div. Nom.* IV 23 (170, 24–171, 1 SUCHLA).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *Div. Nom.* IV 20. 27 (167, 16; 174, 1 SUCHLA); *Amph. Q.* 294 (VI/1 84, 20–21 WESTERINK): ἡ κακία χώραν οὐκ ἔχει, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἀρετῇ παρυφίσταται.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. SCHÄFER, Philosophy (see footnote 40 above) 139 with reference to J. OPSOMER/C. STEEL, Evil without a cause: Proclus’ doctrine on the origin of evil, and its antecedents in

acknowledged as a privation of goodness, a falling short of goodness, a lessening of good (ἥττονος ἀγαθοῦ παρουσία)<sup>102</sup> and, in a moral sense, a weakness, a deficiency and a lack (ἔλλειψις) of the perfection of the inherent virtues (ἐρημία τῆς τῶν οἰκείων ἀγαθῶν τελειότητος).<sup>103</sup> According to Photius, the less someone practices the virtues and thus neglects good deeds, the more he falls into the worst things, i.e., he gives more space to the evil.<sup>104</sup> That means that the status of evil is purely accidental, it depends only on free will, which enables beings to choose and accomplish their way of perfection, while it also enables these same beings rationally freely to deny (the prospect of) characteristic perfection with which their proper nature provides them.<sup>105</sup>

Regardless of its accidental existence, evil remains a reality in the world with a strong effect on the behaviour of beings. It is noteworthy that despite the destructive nature of evil acknowledged by both Christian and Platonic writers, somehow a positive, even pedagogical, aspect is also detected in it. More precisely, it is through the experience of evil that the good becomes more clear and apparent to us. In this point the conceptual coincidence between Photius and Plotinus is more than astonishing:

... ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν διαμαρτυρομένη καὶ κηρύττουσα τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ ἐνεφάνισεν, ἀλλ' ὄν τρόπον εἴρηται τὴν ἀγαθότητα διὰ τῆς κακίας ἐμφανεστεράν καθίστασθαι.<sup>106</sup>

Γνώσις γὰρ ἐναργεστέρα τάγαθοῦ ἢ τοῦ κακοῦ πείρα οἷς ἡ δύναμις ἀσθενεστέρα, ἢ ὥστε ἐπιστήμη τὸ κακὸν πρὸ πείρας γινῶναι.<sup>107</sup>

The third important element concerns the idea of proportionality (ἀναλογία) in the participation of Goodness. All beings do not participate in the same way or to the same degree in the Good, a fact that determines the quality of their relation to God:

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Hellenic philosophy, in Th. Fuhrer/M. Erler (eds.), *Zur Rezeption der hellenistischen Philosophie in der Spätantike*. Stuttgart/Leipzig 1999, 229–260: 246.

**102** Cf. *Div. Nom.* IV 20 (167, 13 SUCHLA).

**103** Cf. *Div. Nom.* IV 24 (172, 16. 19–20 SUCHLA).

**104** Cf. *Amph. Q.* 8 (IV, 42, 46–49 WESTERINK): ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὸν πράττοντα τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἐπειδὴν ταύτην εἰλικρινῶς πράττει, ἀνενέργητον αὐτὸν πρὸς τὴν κακίαν εἶναι, ἀμελήσαντα δὲ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων πρὸς τὰ χείρονα κατενεχθῆναι, οὐδεὶς ἂν διαμφισβητήσει.

**105** SCHÄFER, *Philosophy* (see footnote 40 above) 147 with reference to Dionysius.

**106** *Amph. Q.* 67 (V, 64, 47–49 WESTERINK).

**107** *Enn.* IV 8, 7 (II 175, 15–16 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

Τὸ γὰρ πάντα ἄμοιρον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ οὔτε ὄν οὔτε ἐν τοῖς οὓσι, τὸ δὲ μικτὸν διὰ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐν τοῖς οὓσι καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς οὓσι καὶ ὄν, καθ' ὅσον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μετέχει. Μᾶλλον δὲ τὰ ὄντα πάντα κατὰ τοσοῦτον ἔσται μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον, καθ' ὅσον τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μετέχει.<sup>108</sup>

For that which totally lacks a share in the Good has neither being nor a place in existence, whereas that which has a composite nature owes whatever place it has among beings to the Good, and its place among them and the extent of its being are directly proportionate to the share it has of the Good. In other words, all beings will have a different degree of being according to their share in the Good).<sup>109</sup>

Analogy safeguards the hierarchy and the order within the class of beings: Εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἀναλόγως ἐκάστω τάγαθόν παρῆν, ἦν ἂν τὰ θειότατα καὶ πρεσβύτατα τὴν τῶν ἐσχάτων ἔχοντα τάξιν. Πῶς δὲ καὶ ἦν δυνατόν μονοειδῶς πάντα μετέχειν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, μὴ πάντα ὄντα ταυτῶς εἰς τὴν ὀλικὴν αὐτοῦ μέθεξιν ἐπιτήδεια;<sup>110</sup> [For, if the Good was not present to each being according to their measure, then the most divine and honored (beings) would have belonged to the lowest. But how could it be possible for all beings to participate uniformly in the Good, since they are not all in the same way suitable for full participation in the Good].

The concept of analogy<sup>111</sup> embraces the whole of creaturely being, declaring the ordained degree of participation in God, the degree of proximity to Him. This is merely a process any being has to go through in order to reach its fulfillment. Here too Dionysius and Photius are indebted to their predecessors, especially Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>112</sup> They are indebted to him and also to Plotinus for the idea that God is the inexhaustible source (πηγή)<sup>113</sup> of Goodness, who grants

**108** *Div. Nom.* IV 20 (167, 16–19 Suchla). Cf. Photius *Amph.* (V 233, 59–234, 62 WESTERINK).

**109** Translated by SCHÄFER, *Philosophy* (see footnote 40 above) 137. See also IDEM, *Unde malum. Die Frage nach dem Woher des Bösen bei Plotin, Augustinus und Dionysius*. Würzburg 2002.

**110** *Div. Nom.* VI 20 (166, 1–4 SUCHLA).

**111** In respect to the notion of analogy in Dionysius Areopagites see: A. GOLITZIN, *Et introibo ad altare dei. The mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with special reference to its predecessors in the eastern Christian tradition. Analekta Blatadon*, 59. Thessalonike 1994, 86–88.

**112** Cf. *De hominis opificio*, PG 44, 161C: κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν ἀναλογίαν; *ibid.* 161D: ἀναλόγως ἡ τοῦ ὄντως κάλλους κοινωνία διέξεισι. See also *De infantibus praemature abreptis*, ed. H. HÖRNER. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, III/2. Leiden 1987, 80, 22–23: γνῶσις κατὰ τὸ ἐγχωροῦν ἐστὶν ἡ μετουσία; *ibid.* (84, 15–21): οἱ διὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐν τῷ τῆδε βίῳ τὰς ψυχὰς θρέψαντες ... πρὸς λόγον τῆς ἐνυπαρχούσης αὐτοῖς ἕξεώς τε καὶ δυνάμεως τῆς θείας τρυφῆς μεταλήψονται, ἡ πλειόνος ἢ ἐλάττονος κατὰ τὴν παρούσαν ἐκάστου δύναμιν τῶν προκειμένων μετέχοντες.

**113** Cf. Greg. Nyss., *De Beatitudinibus* 1, ed. J.F. Callahan. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, VII/2. Leiden 1992, 80, 14; Plotinus, *Enn.* III 8, 10 (I 374, 5 HENRY/SCHWYZER); VI 9, 9 (III 285, 1–2 HENRY/SCHWYZER).

(χορηγεῖν – παρέχειν)<sup>114</sup> his gifts (δωρεά)<sup>115</sup> to beings so that they may become good.

This last idea clearly shows a strong tendency of the Christian and Neoplatonic traditions to conceive of God, not as a reality totally separated from his products, but rather as extroversive, extending His Goodness to creatures commensurate with their capacity or incapacity to grasp Him. Although ineffable and inconceivable, we should still be allowed to name Him to the best of our ability (or inability) according to His meaning for us.<sup>116</sup> But how can this be possible? This possibility is based on the clear signs (σύμβολα) and traces (ἵχνη)<sup>117</sup> of His presence that God gives us, not in order to show us what He is, but rather to prevent ignorance of His existence.<sup>118</sup> The Neoplatonic-Areopagitic echoes are more than recognizable and give clear evidence of the essential unity and coherence between Eastern Christianity and ancient Greek thought.<sup>119</sup> This is all the more true for Byzantine thought.

If it can be demonstrated that Neoplatonism is connected both to early Christianity and to early Byzantine thought on several important issues, it can legitimately be asked how Photius would have turned this inherited tradition to his advantage. One could also ask whether Photius impoverishes, transcends, or amplifies the ideas of his predecessors. What are the broader implications of these connections for Photius's and later neoplatonic thought?

**114** *Amph.* (V 234, 63. 66 WESTERINK). Cf. Greg. Nyss., *Beat.* 3 (104, 25 CALLAHAN): τὸ πᾶσι τοῖς οὐσι τὸ εἶναι παρεχόμενον. Plotinus, *Enn.* IV 8, 6 (II 174, 19–20 HENRY/SCHWYZER): τοῦ πᾶσι τὸ ἀγαθόν ... χορηγοῦντος; VI 9, 9 (III 287, 49–50 HENRY/SCHWYZER): ὁ χορηγὸς ἀληθινῆς ζωῆς.

**115** *Amph.* (234, 66). Cf. Dion. Areop., *Div. Nom.* XI 6 (223, 6–8 SUCHLA): αὐτοαγαθότητα καὶ αὐτοθεότητα λέγοντες εἶναι τὴν ἀγαθοποιὸν καὶ θεοποιὸν ἐκ θεοῦ προεληλυθυῖαν δωρεάν καὶ αὐτοκάλλος τὴν καλλοποιὸν χύσιν.

**116** SCHÄFER, Philosophy (see footnote 40 above) 69 with reference to Dion. Areop. and Plotinus. Cf. *Div. Nom.* VII 3 (198, 4–7 SUCHLA): καὶ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ καὶ νόησις καὶ λόγος καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἐπαφή καὶ αἴσθησις καὶ δόξα καὶ φαντασία καὶ ὄνομα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα, καὶ οὔτε νοεῖται οὔτε λέγεται οὔτε ὀνομάζεται. – Of him, there is concept, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name, and many other things. On the other hand he cannot be understood, words cannot contain him, and no name can lay hold of him. – *Enn.* V 5, 6 (246, 24–25 HENRY/SCHWYZER): ἀλλὰ ἡμεῖς ταῖς ἡμετέραις ὥδισιν ἀπορούμε ὃ τι χρὴ λέγειν, καὶ λέγομεν περὶ οὐ ῥητοῦ, καὶ ὀνομάζομεν σημαίνειν ἑαυτοῖς θέλοντες, ὡς δυνάμεθα.

**117** Cf. *Amph.* 181 (V 235, 19 WESTERINK) Cf. also Greg. Nyss., *Cant.* 1 (37, 1 LANGERBECK); *Eun.* II 145 (267, 27 JAEGER); Plotinus, *Enn.* V 5, 5 (II 245, 13–14 HENRY/SCHWYZER); III 8, 1 (I 376, 19–23 HENRY/SCHWYZER); Proclus *Plat. Theol.* II 8 56, 17–20 (SAFFREY/WESTERINK): πᾶσι γὰρ ἐνέσπειρεν ὁ τῶν ὅλων αἴτιος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ παντελοῦς ὑπεροχῆς συνθήματα, καὶ διὰ τούτων περὶ ἑαυτὸν ἴδρυσεν τὰ πάντα, καὶ παρέστιν ἀρρήτως πᾶσιν ἀφ' ὅλων ἐξηρημένος.

**118** Cf. *Amph.* Q. 180 (V, 232, 24–233, 1 WESTERINK).

**119** Cf. HALFWASSEN, Plotin und der Neuplatonismus (as footnote 12 above) 166.

I shall attempt to address these questions one by one, specifically emphasizing those points that are worthy of consideration.

In respect to the naming of God, we can now read Photius not only in continuity with the Cappadocian fathers, but also fully within the Neo-Platonic tradition received via Dionysius. More precisely, it can be demonstrated that Photius transcended the Cappadocian model of ascribing equal value to both Apophasis and Kataphasis<sup>120</sup> by adopting the Neo-Platonic way of radical apophatism and transcendental negation (ὑπεροχική ἀφαίρεσις). In keeping with the Dionysian tradition, this great Byzantine thinker declares with greater emphasis than the Cappadocians that the path of approaching God transcends both negation and affirmation, while simultaneously considering God as beyond any opposition. Unlike the Cappadocians, who consider God (in interpretation of *Exodus* 3:14) as the real being (ὄντως ὄν),<sup>121</sup> Photius, in full conformity with Dionysius,<sup>122</sup> seems to assign an important role to Apophasis in defining God as beyond being (ὑπερούσιον). By virtue of this definition Photius clearly denies that it is possible for created being to define the essence of God, displaying a conceptual consistency with Plotinus. However, the Patriarch also tries to maintain a certain balance between the two ways of approaching God, namely between Apophasis and Kataphasis, by teaching on the outgoing processions of the divine in a manner analogous to the Cappadocians and Dionysius on the energies.

Influenced by Plotinus and Dionysius, Photius appears to adopt the strict notion of unity as the main property of being. The One is supremely intimate with everything because nothing exists except by virtue of some sort of unity. Lack of unity automatically means lack of existence. In this respect Photius seems to amplify what he inherited from the Cappadocians's cosmology on the main characteristics of beings – contingency, qualitative change, and limitation in time. According to Gregory of Nyssa, created being stands in need of an-

**120** In this context one must point out that Gregory of Nazianzus gives a certain priority to kataphatic way of naming God than to apophatic. See *Oratio* 28, 9, ed. P. GALLAY. SC, 250. Paris 1978, 118–120.

**121** Cf. Greg. Nyss., *De Vita Moysis* II 23, ed. H. MUSURILLO. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, VII/1. Leiden 1964, 40, 8. This view has great affinity with the Plotinian conception of *Nous* and is equivalent to the second Hypothesis of Platos' *Parmenides* according to LILLA, *Neuplatonisches Gedankengut* (as footnote 2 above) 94.

**122** One can easily detect the difference between Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius with respect to the relation between God and Being, if he compares their equivalent citations: τὸ πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσι τὸ εἶναι παρεχόμενον, αὐτὸ δὲ αἰεὶ ὄν. Greg. Nyss., *Beat.* (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, VII/2, 104, 25–26); αἴτιον μὲν τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσι, αὐτὸ δὲ μὴ ὄν. Dion. Areop., *Div. Nom.* I 1 (109, 15–16).

other (προσδεές or ἐνδεές),<sup>123</sup> which means that in order to maintain its existence it must partake of the real being. This participation keeps it alive in both a moral and spiritual sense.<sup>124</sup> In addition, created being is subject to change and alteration, since its very existence is due to a change, i.e., the transition from non-being into being.<sup>125</sup> Although mutability is primarily envisaged as a negative (i.e., as an imperfection that makes the creature differ from its Creator), it can also be a vaulting-horse for the constant and limitless growth and progress towards the Good.<sup>126</sup> The third characteristic of created being is its limitation in time. It is stretched out within a certain dimensional extension (διαστηματικῇ τινι παρατάσει) and is defined by a beginning and an end.<sup>127</sup>

Did Photius adopt the Apophatic Theology and Henologie of Neoplatonism to any significant degree? If so, this certainly does not occur at the expense of the patristic view that God is eminently 'personal' in His nature. According to the understanding of Plotinus, the absolute One is not self-giving, even if it is causative, because it is thoroughly impersonal. Everything somehow derives from the One, yet the One gives nothing of itself. In Photius these traces of a latent Agnosticism

**123** Cf. *De Vita Moysis* II 25 (40, 18. 23 MUSURILLO).

**124** Cf. *De infantibus praemature abreptis* (79, 11–13 HÖRNER): ἡ μετουσία τοῦ ὄντος ὄντος τοῦ αἰεὶ μένοντος καὶ αἰεὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχοντος, ἐν τῷ εἶναι φυλάσσει τὸν μετὰσχοντα. See also *De Vita Moysis* II 25 (40, 19).

**125** Cf. *De hominis opificio* 16, PG 44, 184CD: αὐτὴ γὰρ ἡ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι πάροδος, κίνησις τις ἐστὶ, καὶ ἀλλοίωσις τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι κατὰ τὸ θεῖον βούλημα μεθισταμένου ... τὸ διὰ κτίσεως γεγεννημένον ἀπ' ἀλλοιώσεως τοῦ εἶναι ἤρξατο καὶ συγγενῶς πρὸς τὴν τοιαύτην ἔχει τροπὴν.

**126** Cf. In *canticum canticorum* VI (174, 1–13 LANGERBECK): ἡ διὰ κτίσεως παραχθεῖσα εἰς γένεσιν πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον αἰεὶ βλέπει τῶν ὄντων καὶ τῇ μετουσίᾳ τοῦ ὑπερέχοντος διὰ παντός ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ συντηρεῖται καὶ τρόπον τινὰ πάντοτε κτίζεται διὰ τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἐπαυξήσεως πρὸς τὸ μείζον ἀλλοιούμενη, ὡς μηδὲ πέρας ἐνθεωρεῖσθαι μηδὲ ὄρω τινὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον αὐξήσιν αὐτῆς περιγράφεσθαι, ἀλλ' εἶναι πάντοτε τὸ αἰεὶ παρὸν ἀγαθόν, κἂν ὅτι μάλιστα μέγα τε καὶ τέλειον εἶναι δοκῇ, ἀρχὴν τοῦ ὑπερκευμένου καὶ μείζονος – The other that has been brought into being by creation, it constantly looks towards the First Cause of beings, and is preserved in goodness by participation of the transcendent Being. Thus, in a certain sense, it is constantly being created, ever changing for the better in its growth in perfection, so that here too no limit can be found, nor its progressive growth can be limited by any term, but its present state of perfection, no matter how great and perfect it may seem, is always merely the beginning of a greater and superior stage.

**127** Cf. Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 578 (I, 395, 3–11 JAEGER): ἀλλὰ μὴν τὰ ὑπὸ κατάληψιν ἡμετέραν ἐρχόμενα τοιαῦτα ἐστίν, ὥστε πάντως ἢ ἐν διαστηματικῇ τινι παρατάσει θεωρεῖσθαι τὰ ὄντα ἢ τοπικοῦ χωρήματος παρέχειν τὴν ἐννοιαν, ἐν ᾧ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον εἶναι καταλαμβάνεται, ἢ τῇ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ τέλος περιγραφῇ ἐντὸς γίνεται τῆς ἡμετέρας ἐπόψεως ἐπίσης καθ' ἑκάτερον πέρας τῷ μὴ ὄντι περιγραφόμενα.

in the name of radical transcendency<sup>128</sup> are not recognizable. The Patriarch appears here to be attached to the tradition of the Church Fathers, who see in God, beside the essence, another aspect – the *energeia* or energies, which are nothing less than God's providential outgoings towards the creatures. Photius speaks very clearly of *energeia* in Question 181. *Energeia* is synonymous with the creative divine providence (δημιουργική πρόνοια) or the distribution of gifts (χαρισμάτων διανομή) or the donation (δωρεά),<sup>129</sup> concepts one would not associate with an impersonal God, but instead indicate a certain transcendent eminence of personhood.

Photius uses a variety of terms to describe this sort of *ad extra* motion of the Deity. He speaks of αἴγλη and ἀκτίνα,<sup>130</sup> of αὐγή and ἑλλαμψις,<sup>131</sup> of πρόοδος,<sup>132</sup> terms that clearly go back to Dionysius, whose influence on later theologians, such as Gregory Palamas,<sup>133</sup> is indisputable. Speaking of *energeia* the Patriarch speaks of 'a shared area' of God, differentiated from another area that is not shared, the divine essence. Through this crucial, in my view, distinction between essence and energy, Photius offers us a paradoxical metaphysical scheme, which he inherited from the Cappadocians and Dionysius the Areopagite, and according to which God is inaccessible in some respects but nevertheless present in others. This antinomy, God at once wholly unknowable, yet known and self-giving, is stated by Basil of Caesarea,<sup>134</sup> who acknowledged in God another aspect in some way distinguishable from his essence – his operations in the world. He considered them neither as substantial intermediaries nor as created entities, believing that these powers or energies are in no way themselves substances alongside of God.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, these energies can in no way be revealing of the divine essence. They lead the beings to an obscure, not to a full knowledge of it as they form the basis for several notions derived about God, each of which has a name that is applicable to Him and reveals a distinct aspect about Him. But all these notions name aspects of God from a human point view. Conceptualizations of

128 Cf. HALFWASSEN, Aufstieg (as footnote 13 above) 114.

129 Cf. *Amph.* 181 (V 236, 39–41 WESTERINK).

130 Cf. *Amph.* 190 (V 253, 5 WESTERINK).

131 Cf. *Amph.* 182 (V 239, 21 WESTERINK).

132 Cf. *Amph.* 182 (V 239, 11 WESTERINK).

133 Cf. R. SINKIEWICZ (ed.), The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters. *Studies and Texts*, 83. Toronto 1988, c. 146, p. 252, 20. 22. 25 (ἀκτίς) and c. 65, p. 158, 1; c. 147, 252, 12 (ἑλλαμψις). See also c. 85 and 106, p. 182 and p. 202, 19 (οὐσιοποιός πρόοδος καὶ ἐνέργεια).

134 See footnote 42.

135 Cf. *Adversus Eunomium* I 8, ed. B. SESBOUÉ. SC, 299. Paris 1982, 194, 22–25: πῶς οὖν τὸ καταγέλαστον τὸ δημιουργικὸν οὐσίαν εἶναι λέγειν; ἢ τὸ προγνωστικὸν πάλιν ὡσαύτως; καὶ ἀπαξῆλως, πᾶσαν ἐνέργειαν οὐσίαν τίθεσθαι;



God describe God in relation to human beings.<sup>136</sup> Basil insists that there is no initiatory term (λόγος μηνυτής) that can reveal and exhaust the divine mystery.<sup>137</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa took up his brother's outline and moved forward with it. Gregory stated clearly that the sense (λόγος) of essence and of energy is not the same.<sup>138</sup> Like his brother, Gregory asserted that the various names ascribed to God are not contradictory,<sup>139</sup> since they point to different aspects of God's creative activity. They also do not compromise the unity of His nature.<sup>140</sup> According to Gregory, every name is a limited interpretation of the divine energy, and refers to what it is conceived to be around the being (τὸ ἐπιθεωρούμενον τῷ ὄντι),<sup>141</sup> circumscribing the thing without revealing its essence. It indicates the property (προσόν) of being and explains the way of being (πῶς εἶναι) of every existing thing.<sup>142</sup> Thus the variety of names deriving from God's activities have no negative effect on divine simplicity, for they are simply products of human reason (ἐπίνοια) trying to find words for the outgoings (πρόοδοι) of God, not His essence.

Pointing to the non-substantial or personal existence of the divine energies, Gregory of Nyssa displays interesting parallels with Dionysius the Areopagite. The Dionysian 'πρόοδοι' are not beings who stand in the middle between the Deity and creatures somehow constituting an independent ontological order, but instead are different aspects and modes of acting of the creative power of God. One could say God is Wisdom-itself, Life-itself, Goodness-itself.<sup>143</sup> The 'being-making processions' (οὐσιοποιοί πρόοδοι), as Dionysius explicitly calls them in the *Divinis Nominibus*,<sup>144</sup> are the reason why one could make general

**136** See M. DELCOGLIANO, Basil of Caesarea's anti-Eunomian theory of names. Christian theology and late antique philosophy in the fourth century trinitarian controversy. *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, 103. Leiden 2010, 171f.

**137** Cf. *Ep.* 189, 8, PG 32, 696B: οὐκοῦν ἄλλο μὲν τι ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία, ἣς οὕτω λόγος μηνυτής ἐξευρέθη, ἑτέρα δὲ τῶν περὶ αὐτὴν ὀνομάτων ἡ σημασία ἐξ' ἐνεργείας τινὸς ἢ ἀξίας ὀνομαζομένων.

**138** Cf. *Eun.* I 420 (149, 4–5 JAEGER): οὐκ ὁ αὐτὸς τῆς τε οὐσίας καὶ τῆς ἐνεργείας ὁ λόγος. See also *Eun.* II 359 (331, 14–15 JAEGER).

**139** Cf. *Eun.* I 478 (365, 22–23 JAEGER): οὐ γὰρ μάχεται πρὸς ἄλληλα τὰ ὀνόματα ...

**140** Cf. *Eun.* I 353–354 (329, 13–17 JAEGER): δυνατόν εἶναι πολλὰς ἐφαρμόζεσθαι προσηγορίας κατὰ τὰς τῶν ἐνεργειῶν διαφορὰς καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἐνεργούμενα σχέσιν ἐνὶ κατὰ τὸ ὑποκείμενον τῷ νύ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς καὶ ὁ σῖτος εἰς ὧν ἐκ τῶν ποικίλων περὶ αὐτοῦ νοημάτων διαφόρος ἐπωνυμίαις ἐπιμερίζεται.

**141** Cf. *Eun.* III V/56 (180, 23–24 JAEGER).

**142** Cf. *Eun.* III V/60 (182, 12–13 JAEGER).

**143** Cf. E.v. IVÁNKA, Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter. Einsiedeln 1964, 279.

**144** See V 2 (181, 7–15 SUCHLA).

statements about God, not in relation to His essence, but only with reference to His external activity. Dionysius's theological position on this issue is the following: 'You will find that what the Scriptures' writers have to say regarding the divine names refers, in revealing praises, to the *beneficent processions* (πρὸς τὰς ἀγαθουργοὺς προόδους).<sup>145</sup> The variety of this activity is the reason why God could be named simultaneously as nameless (ἄνώνυμος) with respect to His essence, and polynymous (πολυώνυμος) because of His manifold theophanies in beings.<sup>146</sup> The extroversion of God in Goodness extends itself relative to the capacity or incapacity of beings (κατὰ τὸν οἰκεῖον δυνάμενα λόγον) of grasping Him.<sup>147</sup> The notion of analogy seems in this context to be very crucial in Dionysius just as it is in Photius.<sup>148</sup> God provides us with the 'gnoseological' signs (energies) and in that way enables us to speak of Him from our perspective, i.e., from the horizon of being, making statements about Him in proportion to our receptiveness. On this point the conceptual consistency with the views of Plotinus are clearly recognizable. Plotinus in *Ennead* V 5 stated that although the all-transcendent One is ineffable, we should still be allowed to name it to the best of our ability (or rather inability), according to its meaning for us.<sup>149</sup> It is our inherent need and desire that impels us to assign predicates to God, yet simultaneously being conscious of the fact that we are far away from approaching the truth and have no other means at our disposal except insufficient, constructed names.<sup>150</sup> Thus 'every ontological predication with respect to the absolute One results from the transposition of the ability of being to assign accurately predications to that which, due to its transcendence, surpasses it. The content of every predication derives not from the absolute One, but from the (level of) Being'.<sup>151</sup>

The core of this conceptual connection between Christian thought and Neoplatonism vis-à-vis the capacity of being to grasp the divine through the intellect

**145** *Div. Nom.* I 4 (112, 7–10 SUCHLA).

**146** Cf. *Div. Nom.* I 6 (118, 4–119, 9 SUCHLA).

**147** Cf. *Div. Nom.* IV 1 (144, 3 SUCHLA). See also *ibid.* I 2 (110, 13): ἀναλόγοις ἐλλάμψεσι. See SCHÄFER, *Philosophy* (see footnote 40 above) 68. With reference to Gregory of Nyssa see above footnote 111.

**148** See lines 58–60 in the text of *Amph.* 180 above (V 234, 64–66 WESTERINK).

**149** Cf. *Enn.* V 5, 6, 24–25: ἀλλὰ ἡμεῖς ταῖς ἡμετέραις ὁδοῖσι ἀπορούμεν ὃ τι χρὴ λέγειν, καὶ λέγομεν περὶ ῥήτου, καὶ ὀνομάζομεν σημαίνειν ἑαυτοῖς θέλοντες, ὡς δυνάμεθα. See also HALFWASSEN, *Aufstieg* (as footnote 13 above), 177.

**150** Cf. *Enn.* VI 2, 17, 2–5: τὸ μὲν ἀγαθόν, εἰ τὸ πρῶτον, ἦν λέγομεν τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσιν, καθ' ἧς οὐδὲν κατηγορεῖται, ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς μὴ ἔχοντες ἄλλως σημῆναι οὕτω λέγομεν. Cf. also with Dionysius, footnote 51.

**151** HUBER, *Sein* (as footnote 33 above) 81. Compare with Photius *Amph.* 180, lines 71–72: ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστέρων παραληφθῆναι.

could be summed up in the following statement of Dionysius: πάντα γὰρ τὰ θεῖα, καὶ ὅσα ἡμῖν ἐκπέφονται ταῖς μετοχαῖς μόναις γινώσκεται. Αὐτὰ δέ, ὁποῖα ποτε ἔστι κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρχὴν καὶ ἴδρυσιν, ὑπὲρ νοῦν ἔστι καὶ πᾶσαν οὐσίαν καὶ γνῶσιν<sup>152</sup> (Everything divine and even everything revealed to us is known only by way of whatever share of them is granted. Their actual nature, what they are ultimately in their own source and ground, is beyond all intellect and all being and all knowledge). The statement above in no way compromises God's radical transcendence while simultaneously declaring that God gives out a share of what is hidden. Both truths resonate with later Byzantine thought, and especially the work of Gregory Palamas. In his distinction between the divine transcendent being and the uncreated *energeia*, which is 'divided indivisibly (μεριζόμενη ἀμερίστως) according to the image of the sun's rays that gives warmth, light, life and manifests itself to the eyes of those who see',<sup>153</sup> we can detect the broader implications of the connection between Neoplatonism and middle/late Byzantine thought. According to Palamas 'the transcendent, supreme living, divine and good nature that is neither spoken of, nor conceived, nor contemplated in any way because it transcends all things and is always utterly inapprehensible and ineffable for all',<sup>154</sup> provides us with tokens (συνθήματα),<sup>155</sup> reflections (αὐγάς),<sup>156</sup> traces (ἵχνη)<sup>157</sup> of its presence that enable us to form names about it derived from all things, albeit inexactly (καταχρηστικῶς) and not in a proper sense (οὐ κυρίως).<sup>158</sup> Thus it must be called both substance

<sup>152</sup> *Div. Nom.* II 7 (131, 5–7 SUCHLA).

<sup>153</sup> *Cap.* 68 (163, 1–5 SINKIEWICZ).

<sup>154</sup> *Cap.* 106 (201, 1–202, 6 SINKIEWICZ).

<sup>155</sup> Cf. *Pro Hesychastis* 2, 3, ed. J. MEYENDORFF, *Défense des saints hésychastes. Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, Études et documents*, 30. Louvain 1973, 64, 18. See also Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* II 8, ed. H. D. SAFFREY / L. G. WESTERINK. Paris 1968–97, 57, 17–20: πᾶσι γὰρ ἐνέσπειρεν ὁ τῶν ὅλων αἴτιος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ παντελοῦς ὑπεροχῆς συνθήματα, καὶ διὰ τούτων περὶ ἑαυτὸν ἵδρυσεν τὰ πάντα, καὶ παρέσθιν ἀρρήτως πᾶσι ἀφ' ὅλων ἐξηρημένος.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. *Pro Hesychastis* 3, 2 (3, 27 MEYENDORFF). Compare with Photius footnote 130 above.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. *Cap.* 92 (191, 5 SINKIEWICZ). Compare with Plotinus *Enn.* III 8, 11 (II 376, 19–23 HENRY/SCHWYZER); V 5, 5 (III 245, 13–14 HENRY/SCHWYZER) and Photius, *Question* 181, (V 235, 19–21 WESTERINK): ἀπὸ τῶν γνωρίμων ἡμῖν σύμβολά τινα καὶ ἵχνη ἢ ἀρρητος καὶ ἀνεπινόητος θεότης τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως αὐτῆς ἐλλάμψαι προνοουμένη, διὰ τῆς τριαδικῆς οὐκ ἀπηξίωσεν ἐμφανίζεσθαι θεολογίας.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. *Cap.* 106 (202, 17–18 SINKIEWICZ). Compare with Plotinus *Enn.* II 9, 1 (33, 5–7 HENRY/SCHWYZER): ὅταν λέγομεν τὸ ἔν, καὶ ὅταν λέγομεν τάγαθόν ... οὐ κατηγοροῦντας ἐκείνης sc. Φύσεως οὐδέν; VI 2, 17 (43, 2–5 HENRY/SCHWYZER): τὸ μὲν ἀγαθόν, εἰ τὸ πρῶτον, ἦν λέγομεν τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσιν, καθ' ἣς οὐδὲν κατηγορεῖται, ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς μὴ ἔχοντες ἄλλως σημῆναι οὕτως λέγομεν. See also V 5, 6 (32, 31–34 HENRY/SCHWYZER); VI 8, 13 (39, 4 HENRY/SCHWYZER): τῆς πειθοῦς χάριν; VI 8, 13 (39, 48–50 HENRY/SCHWYZER): εἰ τις περὶ ἐκείνου sc. τοῦ ἐνός λέγων ἐξ

and nature, but properly the substance-following procession and energy of God, for the great Dionysius says that this is “the proper way for theology to name the substance of the One Who truly is.”<sup>159</sup>

The statement above makes clear that Palamas acknowledges, in full conformity with Neoplatonism, a certain limitation in approaching God’s reality as a whole. He advances the view that even though a relation of correspondence exists between what God truly is and what God reveals to us, certain limits should be drawn when deducting conclusions from the level of being to the level of that which is beyond being. It is true that there is a connection between the inner Trinity and his activity *ad extra* and vice-versa. The flowing forth of the divine reflects the intra-trinitarian relations, but this does not enable us from our perspective (of being) to penetrate into the mystery of the divine and consequently draw conclusions on how he truly exists. Thus in Palamas’s view only the *energeia* of God is accessible to the creatures. According to theologians (e.g., Dionysius) it is indivisibly divided, whereas the divine nature remains utterly indivisible.<sup>160</sup> ‘How then can we draw near to God? By drawing near to his nature? But not one of all created beings possesses or will possess any communion in, or affinity to, the supreme nature. If then anyone has drawn near to God, he has surely approached him by means of his energy.’<sup>161</sup>

The fundamental distinction between substance and energy, between God’s inner being<sup>162</sup> and His movement *ad extra* is generally accepted by the Christian writers we have been examining. We can detect traces of it also in Neoplatonism. This distinction also has an impact on trinitarian theology and, in particular, on the issue of the procession of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the *Filioque*). An eventual solution to this problem lies exactly in establishing the relation of correspondence between these two levels of ‘being’. The position of modern western theolo-

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ανάγκης ἐνδείξεως ἕνεκα αὐτοῖς χρῆται, ἃ ἀκριβείᾳ οὐκ ἔωμεν λέγεσθαι· λαμβανέτω δὲ καὶ τὸ οἶον ἐφ’ ἐκάστου.

**159** Cap. 106 (202, 18–21 SINKIEWICZ).

**160** Cf. Cap. 74 (168, 1–5 SINKIEWICZ): πανταχοῦ ἀχωρίστως τῆς τε θείας οὐσίας καὶ θείας ἐνέργειας, χωρητὴ ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνέργεια καὶ τοῖς κτιστοῖς ἡμῖν, ἐπεὶ καὶ μερίζεται ἀμερίστως κατὰ τοὺς θεολόγους, τῆς θείας φύσεως ἀμερίστου παντάπασι μενούσης κατ’ αὐτούς. Cf. *Div. Nom.* II 11 (136, 16 SUCHLA).

**161** Cf. Cap. 78 (174, 15–20 SINKIEWICZ): πῶς οὖν ἡμεῖς πλησίον τοῦ θεοῦ γενώμεθα; ἄρα τῇ φύσει πλησιάζοντες αὐτοῦ; ἀλλ’ οὐδεμίαν ἔχει ἢ ἔξει κοινωνίαν ἢ ἐγγύτητα πρὸς τὴν ἀνωτάτω φύσιν τῶν κτιστῶν ἀπάντων οὐδὲ ἓν. εἴπερ οὖν τις γέγονεν πλησίον τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ πάντως ἐπλησίασεν αὐτοῦ.

**162** We draw once more the reader’s attention to the fact that the word being in reference to God is used by us inadequally and not strictly. See footnote 157.

gians<sup>163</sup> passionately defends the possibility of drawing conclusions from the level of economy to the level of theology (i.e., the inner-trinitarian relations). They recall Augustine's teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds principally (*principaliter*) from the Father, who nevertheless (analogously) in the creation constituted a common principle with reference to the Spirit together with the Son.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, according to the same author the sending and the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit by the Son to the world (Pentecost) gives us a clear indication that there must be an equivalent relation of origin between Son and Spirit at the level of the immanent Trinity (*cognosci quod ab illo procedat*).<sup>165</sup>

The same line of reasoning is to be found also in the writings of the *Filioque* supporters in the 13<sup>th</sup> century who tried to convince their suspicious Byzantine audience of the compatibility of *Filioque* with the orthodox Tradition. The question raised by them was: 'If the Holy Spirit exists in no way through the Son and does not take His being through him, how does it happen that the Spirit shines forth and is manifested through him, and that through the Son he is provided, given and sent?'<sup>166</sup> To their mind the eternal manifestation and shining forth of the Spirit through the Son was identified with his coming-into-being, just as (analogically) the sun's rays are brought forth by the sun. From the manifestation, giving, and sending of the Spirit they conclude the participation of the Son in his hypostatic procession: 'The Holy Spirit is undeniably provided, given, and sent through the Son, for he takes His being from the Father through him'.<sup>167</sup>

**163** See the discussion between E. GRÄB-SCHMIDT and B. OBERDORFER in *Marburger Jahrbuch für Theologie* 12 (2000).

**164** Cf. *De Trinitate* V/14, 15: *tatendum est patrem et filium principium esse spiritus sancti no duo principia, sed sicut pater et filius unus deus et ad creaturam relatiue unus creator et unus dominus, sic relatiue ad spiritum sanctum unum principium ...* (one should confess that Father and Son are the principle of the Holy Spirit; not two principles, but, just as Father and Son are one God and with respect to the creation one creator and one Lord, thus they are also one (single) principle with respect to the Holy Spirit).

**165** Cf. *Ibid.*, IV/20, 29. See also Oberdorfer, *Filioque* (as in footnote 1 above) 125.

**166** Cf. Konstantinos Melitiniotes, *Λόγοι ἀντιρρητικοὶ δύο*, ed. M. A. ORPHANOS. Athens 1986, f. 104, (179, 4–7): εἰ μὴδαμῶς ὑφίσταται δι' υἱοῦ καὶ τὸ εἶναι δι' αὐτοῦ λαμβάνει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, πῶς αἰδίως ἐκλάμπει διὰ τούτου καὶ ἀναδείκνυται, πρὸς δὲ χορηγεῖται, δίδοται τε καὶ ἀποστέλλεται.

**167** Melitiniotes, *ibid.* f. 104 (177, 24–178, 6 ORPHANOS): ταῦτα πρὸς τῶν κάτωθεν εἰρημένων παριστάνονται προδήλως τῆς ἀρειανικῆς τυγχάνειν ἀτεχνῶς μανιῶδους αἰρέσεως· ἐπεὶ περ, εἰ μὴ σαφῶς ὑπέκειντο τὰ διαληφθέντα, τὴν δι' υἱοῦ φανέρωσιν τήνδε καὶ τὴν ἐκλαμψιν προσηκάμην ἂν τὴν αἰδίον, ὥς αὐτὴν σημαίνουσιν δηλονότι τὴν ὑπαρξιν, καὶ μάλιστα τὸ ὥσπερ ἐκ τοῦ ἡλίου διὰ τῆς ἀκτίνος τὸ φῶς προσφυὲς παράδειγμα καὶ κατάλληλον, ἐξ ὧν καὶ τὴν εἰς ἡμᾶς χορηγίαν

The movement from economy to the level of theology encountered strong opposition from Patriarch Gregory of Cyprus, another important Byzantine author of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, who dealt with the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit. He argued the distinction between the unapproachable divine essence and the uncreated, but participatory, energies of God. In his view only the energy of God and nothing else can be an object of participation. The appeal to his predecessors, and especially to Dionysius, is striking. If we identify the inner being-essence of God with his outgoings-energy, then do we not participate and have communion with that essence? 'And how then will his word be true, who says that the Divine can be participated in only through the energies and the manifestations?'<sup>168</sup> In this matter Gregory vehemently argued against those who explained the existence of the creator in such a way that made Him equivalent to how created things come into existence.<sup>169</sup> The way of being of God can in no way be analogous to the way of being of creatures. There are certain ontological limits that cannot be broken. All the above considerations provide a solid ground for the claim that the crucial distinction between essence and energies, between an aspect that is totally unknowable and another that is knowable,<sup>170</sup> and which goes back to the Cappadocian Fathers, is undeniably and firmly maintained by Photius, and then through him adopted by the Palamites. This distinction should be understood in a thoroughly paradoxical way – God is imparticipable in His essence but one can participate in His energies. This view is expressed by Dionysius the Areopagite, Photius, and then Gregory Palamas, which gives us a clear indication of the connection between Neoplatonism and Eastern Christian Thought. We point once more emphatically to the last abstract of the text from Amphilochia we have just examined: 'From what has been said it is clearly possible to seek for some idea that God exists, and that he is the transcendent One and Origin beyond Origin, supremely good, the Good as fountain of goodness; other images and speculations, as was said at the beginning, being able to

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καὶ δόσιν καὶ ἀποστολήν, ἔστερξα. Δι' υἱοῦ γὰρ ἀναντιρρήτως χορηγεῖται καὶ δίδεται καὶ ἀποστέλλεται τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὡς δι' αὐτοῦ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχον τὴν ὑπαρξίν.

**168** *De processione Spiritus sancti*, PG 142, 289D–290 A, with reference to *Div. Nom.* II 7 (131, 5–13 SUCHLA).

**169** *Ibid.* 281C: Πρὸς δὲ ταῦτα ἄλλος μὲν ἂν τις ἴσως ἔσχε σιγῇ βύσας καὶ τὰ ὦτα, μὴ θεμιτὸν κρίνας πρὸς ἄνδρας, οἱ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς κτίσεως ὑπαρξίν καθ' ὁμοιότητα τῶν ποιημάτων τροπολογοῦσιν. On this issue see TH. ALEXOPOULOS, Die Argumentation des Patriarchen Gregorios II des Kyprios gegen den Filioqueansatz in der Schrift *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, BZ 104 (2011) 1–38.

**170** Cf. *Cap.* 82 (180, 16–19 SINKIEWICZ): τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ μὲν ἔστιν ἄγνωστον, ἦγουν ἡ οὐσία αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ γνωστόν, ἦγουν πάντα τὰ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν, τουτέστιν ἡ ἀγαθότης, ἡ σοφία, ἡ δύναμις ...

drawn from posterior things, whereby it is possible to gaze upon that unattainable and indescribable beauty of the transcendent and supreme Deity ...’.

The present study focused its attention on the philosophical and theological analysis of selected passages from Photius’s *Amphilochia* trying to detect linguistic and conceptual similarities between Neoplatonism and the so-called Christian Platonism manifested in the Byzantine theology of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. More precisely, the study tried to show if, and to what extent, Neoplatonic elements manifested themselves in the thought of Patriarch Photius, investigating the broader implications of this connection on later Byzantine Fathers such as Gregory Palamas. The analysis gives clear evidence that Photius adopted the so-called Apophatic Theology and Henologie so characteristic of Plotinus and Dionysius. The unanswered problem is the question of how these central elements of Neoplatonic metaphysics were transmitted to Photius. The likely candidate is Dionysius, maybe the most influential representative figure of so-called Christian Platonism. Analysis of the text shows not only conceptual, but also verbal and stylistic, similarities with the work of the Areopagite. It might have also been transmitted directly through Photius’s study of Plotinian works, although textual analysis argues for an indirect knowledge of Plotinian writings via Dionysius. That is why the article in its title speaks of “echoes.” In order to come to a conclusion on this issue, focus should be paid to Photius’s interpretation of Aristotelian categories as compared to the thought of Plotinus. Such a study would be an important contribution to the field of Patristics and could provide us with crucial insight into the question of the relation between Photius and Plotinus. I would encourage any scholar to undertake this effort.